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Reflected Images: How Lived Experiences Shape the Identities of First-Generation Greek Immigrants

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By

Michael S. Varverakis

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS, MINNESOTA

Reflected Images: How Lived Experiences Shape the Identities
of First-Generation Greek Immigrants

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation Committee

Bruce H. Kramer, Ph.D., Committee Chair

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October 25, 2011
Final Approval Date

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to my family. To my wife, Lynette for her love, guidance, wisdom, and perseverance. Se agapo, matia mou! And to my son, Stephen for his love and words of encouragement. I am fortunate and privileged to have had their support as I realized one of my personal dreams and aspirations.

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Abstract

This qualitative study provides insight into many aspects of the assimilation of the Greek immigrant into American society. The study participants were members of a seniors club which met monthly at a Greek Orthodox Church. The seniors participated in activities that blended elements from both Greek and American traditions to have fun, catch up with friends, celebrate life's events, and navigate the changes associated with aging in a safe, controlled environment. Data were collected through: participant observations over a three and a half year period, conducting interviews, listening to seniors present their life stories and documenting the discussions that followed.

The theories of John Dewey, Fesmire's work on Moral Imagination and Aesthetic Representation, and Fasching's and deChant's, *Comparative Religious Ethics,* were used to explore issues of identity and meaning in social interactions, as well as how cultural settings affect the meaning individuals derive from their experiences. The study identifies critical transitions and adaptations from living a purely Greek lifestyle to one incorporating American elements- a hybrid Greek-American identity.

Researchers and policy-makers alike can apply the methods used in this study to understand how immigrant experience affects the assimilation of immigrant populations into American society and find ways to promote the development of a positive ethnic-American identity.

Prologue

"AMERIKANAKI, Pigene spiti!" Thirty years later, I can still hear their voices. I was 15 years old at the time and happy to be back in my homeland on the island of Crete. I remember the scene vividly: five teenage boys were playing soccer as our taxi pulled up to the curb. They watched my family get out and enter the apartment building where we would be staying. I helped carry in the bags and then hurried back outside. I hadn't gotten within 20 feet of their game when I was greeted with "Little American, Go home!" I quickly passed them and walked to my Pappou's (grandfather) house.

We had been away from Crete for 10 years, but the excitement I felt at returning quickly turned to dread at hearing those words. "I am home!" I remembered thinking, "What are they talking about? Why are they saying that to me?" I had expected a warm welcome home; not malicious taunts that questioned my patriotism.

Those boys did not realize that, even though we lived in the United States, my parents stressed the importance of preserving our Greek identity. Greek was the only language spoken at home and I was enrolled in evening classes at the Greek school to continue developing my language skills and to learn about Greece's history and traditions. My family worshiped at the local Greek Orthodox Church, socialized exclusively with other Greek families, and patronized the Greek establishments in our area.

However, my parents also recognized the need to get a good education through the American public school system. I quickly learned English and took full advantage of my opportunities. I excelled in the academic setting and made connections with teachers and students who accepted me and my strong ethnic roots. I was proud when my teachers referenced Greek history, literature, art, and mathematics in their courses. For instance, I learned how the

ancient Greek civilization influenced modern democracy; I read Greek plays; and I even learned that the angles in triangles were represented by the Greek letter, theta!

Even though I still felt "Greek" every time I went to school, or ran errands for my parents at the bank, post office, or pharmacy; my interactions helped me become more acclimated to American society. Before going back to visit my relatives in Greece and hearing the boys mock me with "Little American, Go home!", I had been confident in my Greek identity. I never considered what effect my interactions outside of the Greek community had on me, until that day on Crete. The boys made me question who I was. "How ironic," I thought, "In America, I am recognized as a Greek, but when I go back home to Greece I'm considered an American." Up to that point in my life it had never occurred to me that I was becoming a product of two cultures. I wondered, "What does that mean?"

Introduction

The upper Midwest has seen an increased influx in immigrants in recent years. This phenomenon has generated a lot of media attention as communities struggle to provide adequate support and services. Reading various newspaper articles reminded me of my family's immigration from Greece. I could not help but reflect on how my experiences in America, and in Greece, influence how I view myself. I also wondered how the immigrants mentioned in those articles would react to American culture, and yet preserve their ethnic traditions and way of life.

During that time, I had an appointment with Dr. Kramer, my advisor at St. Thomas University. We were meeting to discuss possible dissertation topics. He finally looked at me and asked," Michael, what are you passionate about? Only a topic that you are passionate on will enable you to finish a dissertation." I recalled the articles on immigration and realized that I had found my dissertation topic. I am a first-generation Greek immigrant; my experiences are unique to me, but as a Greek-American, I can examine the experiences of other Greek immigrant groups in order to understand how those experiences influence their identity development.

Brief Overview Of Chapters

Chapter 1

This chapter establishes the context for this study. Previous studies have identified the issues that immigrants struggle with to adapt to life in America. However, these studies do not explain how immigrants work through the issues or how the issues influence their identity development. The literature review confirmed that a study of this nature has merit.

Chapter 2

This chapter describes the study design, including methods used to gather the data and theories used in the analysis. I present two methodological lenses: Fasching and DeChant, who use a taxonomic ethics of "sacred" vs. "holy," and John Dewey's Critical Pragmatism. These two

lenses provide an understanding on how one's experiences (and the setting where those experiences occur) can influence identity development.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are the data chapters. The study participants were all members of a seniors club that met at a Greek Orthodox Church. Chapter 3 describes the building along with the types of experiences the seniors had in this setting.

Chapter 4 is a description of the meetings; how the seniors participate in activities that blend elements from both Greek and American traditions to have fun, catch up with friends, celebrate life's events, and navigate the changes associated with aging in a safe and controlled environment.

Chapter 5 is a description of life stories shared by the seniors during their monthly meetings. The chapter includes reactions to the life stories during the group discussions which followed each presentation.

The content from the three data chapters, when considered together, documents how the seniors not only participated in various rituals of togetherness to hold onto their Greek identity, but also how they interacted to forge a Greek-American identity. I use Fasching and deChant to frame these chapters as their work focuses on how people tie or bind themselves in ways that reinforce their way of life.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 is the analysis chapter. I explain how these seniors were able to negotiate from being solely Greek to Greek-American by looking at their experiences through a critical pragmatic lens. I also address my transformation from Greek immigrant to Greek-American and

how my experience contributed to understanding the process of identity development for the Greek immigrants in the study.

Chapter 7

This chapter addresses how the findings from this study can be used to understand how the experiences of other immigrant groups affect their assimilation into American society. I conclude by presenting the case for why additional studies are needed and why insiders (individuals who belong to the immigrant group) should conduct these studies.

Significance Of The Study

All immigrants must develop new behaviors in order to assimilate into American society, and yet they wish to preserve their ethnic traditions and way of life. This study identifies the process immigrants go through to negotiate a blending of ethnic and American values. Understanding this process can be beneficial in helping immigrants develop a more positive ethnic-American identity resulting in more active participants in American society.

Chapter One
Establishing The Context

Takaki (2008) stated that "America is a country of immigrants; it is a nation peopled by the world." Unfortunately, we have been taught to see America through a filter Takaki called "The Master Narrative of American History." According to this "powerful and popular but inaccurate story, our country was settled by European immigrants; and Americans are white. In the creation of our national identity, "American" has been defined as "white." Not to be "white" is to be designated as the "Other"- different, inferior, and unassimilable" (p. 5). Takaki wants us to replace this inaccurate image of America with one that "recognizes that people of multicultural America belong to a society unique in the world because the world is found here- a place where cultures of the world crisscross" (p. 19).

"The continent's original inhabitants were joined by people pushed from their homelands by poverty and persecution in Asia, Latin America, and Europe, and pulled here by extravagant dreams. Others came here in chains from Africa, and still other fled here as refugees from countries like Vietnam and Afghanistan. And all of them belonged to the great migrations that made the American people" (p. 20).

Greek immigrants, for example, came primarily for economic reasons- to accumulate enough wealth to support their families for the traditional dowry system. Finding money for the purpose of marrying off Greek women has always been a difficult task in Greece. Many a home has been impoverished by the payment of dowries. America offered a remedy and many brothers and fathers of Greek women, as well as many women in later years of the immigration movement, migrated to America for that reason alone (Koken, 1995). Although brothers and

fathers intend to return to Greece once monies are raised they, like the women who come to America (to avoid the dowry system), indubitably decide to stay.

Regardless of the reason or circumstance, every immigrant hopes to have a better life in America. However, immigrants have to overcome many societal and cultural challenges before they can fit in the new culture. Feldstein and Costello (1974, p. 358) stated that immigrants (also referred to as aliens) were constantly under pressure to strip themselves of all aspects of their Old World backgrounds- to forgo their ethnic characteristics and instead adopt the customs and language of American culture.

The individual is removed from many of his relationships and a predictable context: community, jobs, customs and often language. Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) emphasized that without a sense of cultural competence, control, and belonging, these changes in relationships, contexts, and roles disorient immigrants and inevitably lead them to experience a keen sense of loss, because immigrants can't compare the here and now with the there and then. For this reason, most immigrants decide to live in cities where they can congregate in larger numbers; speaking a common language and having the same value system. They come to depend on other immigrants already there for guidance and support (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

This is true for the Greek immigrants as well. They begin to recreate the society they had left back in Greece. A Greek ethos, or system of values, is transplanted to America; a way of life built on the dual foundations of the Greek Orthodox faith and Hellenism. These values are based on family, faith, ethnic pride, education, personal honor, and hard work. Early immigrants fiercely nurtured these values by building Greek Orthodox churches as centers for religious, cultural, and social needs. Kunkleman (1990) stated "Greek Orthodoxy is an inextricable part of Greek ethnicity. The church is vitally important in the lives of the Greeks and plays an

undeniable ethnic role" (p. 9). In its fundamental beliefs, the church is conservative, resistant to change, and allows for little flexibility (Rouvelas, 2002). The church functioned in a very familiar fashion to his church in Greece and gave the immigrant a much needed sense of structure, stability, and control in his life.

However, immigrants must still learn new cultural rules and interpersonal expectations so they can interact with individuals outside of their ethnic communities. Although immigrants often have to learn the language, it is not the only form of communication that they must learn. They must also re-learn what constitutes acceptable modes of behavior so that they can interact effectively with members of the host culture. For instance, proximity to individuals, eye contact, appointments, and volume of normal speaking can no longer be taken for granted (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

After the first Greek immigrants established secular organizations to sustain the transplanted ethos of the first generation, the same organizations were used to help new immigrants adjust to life in America (Scourby, 1984). For example in 1922, the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) was founded. The members of this organization taught new immigrants English and helped them settle in their new cities (Moskos, 1989). Another example is the Hull House, located in Chicago. There, the Greeks of Chicago not only found sympathy, but also aid and guidance, since most Greek immigrants did not know the language or customs and had come from rural villages and were slow to adapt to the change in their environment (Koken, 1995; Thomopoulos, 2000).

Immigrants faced changes not only in community, but also changes within the home. Each individual in the family unit had a specific role. In many countries, including Greece, the father worked outside of the home and was the main source of income while the mother took

care of the home and raised the children. Grandparents were held in high esteem and supported the family unit mainly through their council- based on their life experiences. Parents and grandparents spoke with authority and wisdom, and children did not question their decisions.

In America, the immigrant family realized that they would have difficulty maintaining this social dynamic. In the immigrant's homeland, only the husband worked outside of the home. In the U.S., the wife might also feel compelled out of economic necessity to find work outside of the home. While many immigrant women found this to be liberating and felt content with the new situation, tension may have resulted between a husband and wife over the wife's new role (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Minn, 1998).

Callinicos (1991) looked specifically at the role of Greek women in her book, *American Aphrodite*. She found that old world values restricted women of all ages from reaching their full potential in America. Many Greek women are seriously challenged in their efforts to accommodate the values of two different worlds. The pressure to remain part of the community, obey parents' rules, and be good Greek girls who marry and bear children is still very strong. The conflict arises between family loyalty and self-realization, between duty to parents and community, and the pursuit of the American way of life. Many Greek-American girls are given less freedom than their male counterparts and tend to remain close to their mothers even after marriage. The pursuit of education and a career is secondary and may even be perceived as un-Greek or unwomanly, for only men have been traditionally encouraged to pursue higher education (Callinicos, 1991).

Regardless of whether or not she worked outside of the home, "the wife was still expected to carry the burden of responsibility in maintaining the traditions, values, and norms of the country of origin" (Callinicos, 1991, p. 33). Women emerged as the keepers of culture and

family traditions, because immigrants feared the negative effects of Americanization; especially on their children (Espin, 1987).

Immigrant parents, whether Greek or not, therefore acknowledged that they feared to lose their children to the new culture. The voice of reason, firmly established back in their home land, which spoke of "this is the way we do things", loses its power in America where the children are introduced to a new culture. Parents do their best to instruct their children on the importance of maintaining their ethnic values (and ethnic identity) while also stressing the need for their children to take advantage of all the opportunities available to them. For example, all immigrant parents stress the need to get a good public education. (Callinicos, 1991)

Immigrant children, though, do not understand the apprehension their parents have in regards to them losing their ethnic identity. They learn the new language faster than their parents and then use it more frequently than their native language. The immigrant child's fast absorption into the new culture will create particular conflicts and tensions within the family, because the children may have feelings ranging from vague to intense embarrassment in regard to aspects of their parents' old country and old fashioned ways (Falicov, 1998). Another area that leads to tension is that, as the children move away from using their native language, they can no longer communicate the subtleties of thought and emotion. For example, a child may be able to say that her bath water is too hot or too cold, but lacks the vernacular to say it is tepid. Also, parents and children switch back and forth between native and new languages and, in the process, are not able to communicate and completely miss one another's intent (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). For example, children can take advantage of the situation by telling their parents that an "F" stands for fabulous on a report card.

For this reason, immigration tends to have a destabilizing effect on the entire family (Falicov, 1998; Sluzki, 1979). Social dynamics change not only due to the displacement of the immigrant to a new culture, but also when parental roles change, and yet again when children are asked to take on new responsibilities for the betterment of the family. Children learn English more quickly than their parents and are placed in situations where they must advocate for them. Children learn family secrets: medical, legal, etc. Roles are reversed, turning culturally scripted dynamics of parental authority upside down (Shuval, 1980).

While children are given more power in the family, former family leaders like grandparents may be demoted. Grandparents and parents alike feel inadequate to assist the family. Immigrant parents have no map of experience before them, their self-assurance and authority can be undermined both in the outside world as well as in the more intimate world of the family (Hoffman, 1989). Without proficiency in the new culture, immigrant parents are less able to provide guidance in negotiating the currents of a complex society; they must also rely on their children for cultural explanations. The old are forced to learn from the children (Proulx, 1996).

For this reason, immigrant families feel they have to make a Faustian bargain; parents instruct the children that it is okay for them to pick up some cultural competencies while at the same time they have to resist others (Santiago, 1998). Immigrant parents universally decry that American popular culture falls short in such realms as dating, respect of elders, and peer relations, and instruct their children to avoid that draw. Unfortunately, children are often left confused by parental rules that seem contradictory. Immigrant parents walk a tightrope; they encourage their children to develop competencies necessary to function in the new culture, all the while maintaining traditions and language at home (Hoffman, 1989). Although Santiago and

Hoffman stated that immigrant parents worry that the children will become too American, they do not elaborate further. I was left wondering what "too American" means. Regardless, all researchers affirmed that immigrant children are drawn into the dominant culture (Hoffman, 1989).

What happens to these children who try to balance two different cultures? Researchers like Grinberg and Grinberg (1989), believed the experiences of children of immigrants offer a powerful lens through which to view the workings of identity. Ethnic identity is a feeling shared by individuals in a given group and based on a sense of common origin, common beliefs and values, common goals, and shared destiny (Helms, 1990).

While the community does its best to shelter its immigrant children from within, outside factors can still influence how the children see themselves. Du Bois (1986) was the first researcher to inquire on how greater society can affect a child's sense of self; through a process he called social mirroring. Du Bois termed it double- consciousness, a sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. Stereotyping is one example of social mirroring and can have either a positive or negative effect on how the immigrant child sees himself (1986).

Immigrant children are keenly aware of their reception outside of their ethnic communities. When children are seen as ethnic, they feel that they must be/behave in an ethnic manner. They wear a costume with a crafted persona and they feel like frauds, ethnic impostors. They struggle to understand who they are and whether there is anyone else quite like them (Navarette, 1993).

Identities and styles of adaptation are therefore powerfully linked to context and social mirroring. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) found immigrants can make one of three choices. They can embrace total assimilation and complete identification with mainstream

American culture. They can forge a new ethnic identity- one that incorporates selected aspects of both the culture of origin and mainstream American culture. Or lastly, develop an adversarial identity that rejects mainstream American culture.

Scourby (1984, pp. 73-74) suggested generational differences affected the identity development of those of Greek descent. Historically, the first generation of Greek Americans vigorously tried to preserve values from the motherland and worried about the influences of the larger American society. The second generation (those born in America but having at least one parent born in Greece) were more assimilated but often felt ambivalent about their Greekness. They felt a strong attraction to American society and often rejected certain aspects of Greek tradition; this group can also contain first generation Greek immigrants if they immigrated at a young age. The third generation (those born with two parents born in America) usually felt comfortable as Americans of Greek heritage (Scourby, 1984).

Rouvelas (2002) took this one step further by adding that "Greek values exist in an ever-changing society, and Greek-Americans deal with issues of identity and ethnicity in different ways, because the practice of traditions and customs differs enormously from one family to another" (p. 3). She mentioned that American society's attitude towards Greek immigrants changed in the 1960s. Thus people of Greek descent, regardless of which generation they belonged to, became encouraged by the change in American society and felt pride in their ethnic background, making it easier for them to be both Greek and American.

In conclusion, after conducting this literature review on Greek immigration several questions need to be answered. Immigrants transplanted a Greek ethos to America that was built on the dual foundations of the Greek Orthodox faith and Hellenism and that the early immigrants fiercely nurtured those values by building Greek Orthodox churches as centers for their religious,

cultural, and social needs. Both Kunkleman (1990) and Rouvelas (2002) agreed that "Greek Orthodoxy is an inextricable part of Greek ethnicity" (Kunkleman, 1990). Early immigrants depended on their churches which were conservative, resistant to change, and allowed for little flexibility. Although this fits the needs of the first generation Greek immigrant, does it also fit the needs for others in the Greek community who belong to later generations? What happens when members across all generations congregate to worship together? Or after the church service when they gather to socialize in the fellowship hall during coffee hour?

Also, Scourby (1984) said generational differences affect the identity development of those of Greek descent. She discussed generational differences with broad strokes; she did not delve in specifics. For example, ethnic people like to live together for support. This works well when everyone is of like mind. She does not address what the Greek community did when its members did not follow the norms of its society, or what happened when individuals across the generations interacted with each other, or how they saw each other in terms of their varying ethnic identities. Her work suggested the transitions from one generation to the next were smooth and uneventful, with no conflict. Is this really the case?

Rouvelas (2002) suggested, "Greek Americans deal with issues of identity and ethnicity in different ways, because the practice of traditions and customs differs enormously from one family to another" (p. 3). While Rouvelas mentioned that people of Greek descent are proud to be Greek-American, she did not say what Greek-American means only that "each individual finds a personal balance" and is influenced in some way by the following common values: family, religion, ethnic pride, education, personal honor, hospitality, and work ethic – where "some people are more Greek; some are more American- thereby defying sociologists who try to profile a typical Greek American" (p. 160).

She does broach the idea of identity being tied to Greek values and ethnicity- on a personal level; but does not delve into how the immigrants or members from later generations with dissimilar practices reconciled their differences within the Greek community or what happened when people with differing beliefs interacted with each other. How did the Greek community stay a cohesive group when its members held different beliefs?

This study aims to answer these questions by exploring and describing the experiences first generation Greek immigrants have when they arrive to America in order to obtain a clearer understanding of how their experiences have helped shape their identity.

Chapter Two
Methodology

Using Qualitative Research Methods

A qualitative research methodology was ideal for this study because, "qualitative research has the goal of understanding subjects from participation perspectives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 2). My aim is to get at the subjective meaning of an experience for an individual or group of people. This is accomplished when entering a research setting and making participant observations of those found in that setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). An inherent strength of using a qualitative study is that researchers recognize and value the importance of the context, setting, and the participants' own frames of reference in attempting to understand the phenomena under study by employing a methodology that explores, explains, and describes the phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested standards for qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. A credible study is conducted in a manner to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is ensured in this study by confirming that all study participants met the study selection criteria; they were first-generation Greek immigrants, the children of first-generation Greek immigrants, or the spouses of either of these two. I entered a research setting where a group of Greek immigrants gathered on a regular basis that included discussions of their life experiences. The group interactions were spontaneous and added authenticity to the process that may not have been possible if the study participants had been brought together solely for the research study.

The second construct is transferability or generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher must be able to generalize the findings from a particular sample of the study

population to the entire population from which that sample was drawn. Generalizability can be enhanced by triangulating multiple sources of data. Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point to corroborate, or elaborate on the research question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, data were collected and compared through various means that included: my participant observations with field notes, accounts of study participants' experiences during interviews and presentations, and reading a historical book on the Greek community of which the study group belonged.

The third construct is dependability. Social interaction is not static, but involves a dynamic process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I attempted to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the study design created by understanding the setting. I recognized that the social world is always being constructed and that the concept of replication is itself problematic. The selected study population consisted of a very stable group of individuals who met in the same setting over the duration of the study, and whose meetings consisted of a prescribed and stable format.

The last construct is confirmability. Do the data help confirm the general findings of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)? Self-reflection served as my foundational assessment of confirmability. I examined any underlying assumptions, biases, values, and epistemological views brought to the qualitative research process. Inherent in this was my willingness to acknowledge the dilemmas and difficulties encountered in the process. This self-reflective process was extremely important for this study, since I too am a first generation Greek immigrant.

Subject Selection

I became aware of a group of immigrants through Father Gabriel, a local Greek Orthodox priest. My original intent was to approach him and ask for permission to advertise for study participants in the church bulletin. He refused my request, but then directed me to a seniors club that included many first-generation Greek immigrants. This club met monthly at the church. In the following section, Gaining Access, I describe what I had to go through to gain the acceptance of the seniors club.

The study was originally intended to include first-generation immigrants. However, I observed very interesting interactions between all members of the club, whether first- generation immigrants, the children of immigrants, or the spouses of either of these two, that provided valuable insights into how individuals and families adapted to life in the United States. As a result, subject selection for the study was widened to include all fifty two members of the seniors club as study participants.

Gaining Access

In the previous section, I mentioned that I had first approached Father Gabriel. During the meeting, he asked me several personal questions: “Are you Greek?” (Yes); “You don’t attend St. Mary’s. I would have seen you in church. Do you attend Holy Trinity?” (No, I do not. But I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My family attended St. Nicholas’. Our priest there was Father George); “Good, I attended seminary with Father George. So you’ve been baptized in the church?” (Yes); “Do you speak Greek?” (Ne, milo para poli kala. Miloosame Elinika sto spiti ke epiga sto Eliniko scholio stin ecclesia otan imoun mikro paidi. Apo taxes mia mehri octo. Translation: Yes, I speak very well. My family spoke Greek in the home and I also went to Greek school at the church, from grades 1-8 when I was a small child). Father Gabriel appeared satisfied with my responses. He then directed me to contact Veli, the president of the seniors club

that met monthly at the church. “Maybe she can help you,” Father Gabriel said.

I contacted Veli and she too insisted that I answer a few questions that turned out to be very similar to Father Gabriel’s. But after discussing my background, Veli also wanted to know about the nature of my study. I explained that I wanted to talk to first generation Greek immigrants about their experiences in the U. S., but she refused to give me permission to attend a seniors meeting. I sensed that she was about to end the phone call, so I shared with her the experience I mentioned in the prologue. After many seconds of silence, she relented. She would allow me to attend the next scheduled meeting, but she also warned, “It’s not up to me. The seniors will decide if they will speak to you.”

I attended the next seniors club meeting. Veli escorted me into the meeting and introduced me to the group. Over the next hour, I was passed from one senior to the next. Each one had a task for me to complete. Petros, for example, was arranging items on a table. He informed me that the seniors played Bingo and that the items served as prizes. While I helped him arrange the items, we talked about Greece. He asked me, “Where were you born?” (On the island of Crete), then said, “Veli told me about your story. You’ll have to come out to the house sometime so we can talk” (You bet. That would be great!). Before I could say anything more, Veli was directing me to the kitchen. “Michael, can you help in the kitchen? We’re running late.”

The kitchen was filled with rich fragrant aromas that brought back fond childhood memories of helping mamma make the cream sauce for mousaka and pastitso. My reward for stirring the rich cream sauce was to eat any leftover cream with a large wooden spoon that I would lick like a large lollypop. I was very surprised at the memory; it had been over thirty five years ago. A husband and wife, Steve and Hope, were busy preparing food. Steve asked me to bring a cart and follow him out to the parking lot. We transferred several large containers from

the car onto the cart and rolled it back to the kitchen. We talked (I answered questions about my background) as we finished the lunch preparation.

Veli walked into the kitchen to tell Hope and Steve that the seniors had started to arrive. She grabbed me by the elbow and walked me back into the large room. “The seniors are arriving. You can sit next to Toula.” She let go of my elbow and walked to the door. “Which one of you is Toula?” I thought to myself. While I saw many seniors looking at me, only one waved to get my attention. “Toula?” I inquired. She smiled, patted the chair to her left and replied, “You can sit here, Michael.” I remember thinking, “How do you know my name?” I had never seen her before.

Toula and I spoke in both Greek and English as she asked me questions about Pittsburgh and the Greek community there. Toula introduced me to the seniors that sat down at our table. It is common knowledge among Greeks that families from the island of Crete have last names that end with the suffix- kis and several seniors immediately sought to confirm that I was indeed from Crete.

Almost every senior also wanted to know why they had not seen me in church; all I said was that I didn’t attend St. Mary’s. When one of the seniors volunteered that I must be going to the other Greek Orthodox Church in the area, a woman yelled out, “No, he doesn’t. I haven’t seen him there.” “Her son is the priest at Holy Trinity,” Toula added. “Ah, that’s nice,” I told the woman. She continued, “So where do you go to church?” I did not reply. “You’re not a heathen?” A shocked Toula yelled. All of a sudden I heard the women around me gasp. “No I am not a heathen. I attend a Presbyterian church close to my home.” I replied; truly exasperated at being interrogated with their endless questions. “Presbyterian?” Toula snorted. She rolled her eyes, looked me up and down, and cackled once again while some of the seniors laughed at my

discomfort. After a few seconds she added, "Well at least you go to church." I thought angrily, "Wow, great job Michael! So much for going into a research setting, being unobtrusive, and getting subjects to participate in your study. Who'll want to talk with you now? And a heathen? Did she seriously call me a heathen!"

Veli then started the meeting. Several items were discussed before Veli asked me to approach the front of the room. I was very anxious and hoped that I could convince at least some of the seniors to participate in my study- especially the ones sitting on the opposite side of the room who hadn't participated in Toula's interrogation.

I left my seat to stand next to Veli. With microphone in hand, she told the seniors, "Mr. Michael Varverakis wants to ask you some questions for a study he is doing at St. Thomas University. He is Greek. Wouldn't it be nice if Mr. Varverakis joined us for our meetings?" Toula, the ring leader of the group; yelled out, "It's okay with me." Petros followed with, "Me too," and Steve added, "Yes, Michael helped Hope and me prepare the food for lunch!" I saw the seniors look at the people who spoke out and nod in affirmation. No one else commented. Veli finished, "Thank you, everyone. It's settled." She looked at me and said, "Welcome, Michael."

As I walked back to my chair, many seniors greeted me with handshakes, smiles, or nods. Evidently Veli had pre-arranged for certain seniors to "interview me" and while I was astounded by the process, I was very thankful that I was welcome at the senior club meetings.

Study Data

Data were collected for the study by documenting behavioral observations during the seniors club meeting as a participant observer; watching videotapes of study participants talking about their life experiences; referencing a book on the historical account of the Greek community to which the study participants belong; and conducting individual interviews.

Field notes were taken in the research setting (the Greek Orthodox Church), during the

monthly meetings of the seniors club. Meetings were held every second Tuesday of each month from March to December of each calendar year; data were collected in the research setting for a period of three and a half years. The meetings started around 12:00 p.m. and lasted until 3:00 p.m. and followed a highly structured format. The priest of the church would lead the seniors in the invocation; give the members an update on upcoming events in the life of the church, along with updates on visitations to those who were sick. The priest would then be excused and the study participants would conduct the business portion of their meetings and plan upcoming social activities.

Following the business meeting, members ate lunch and celebrated birthdays and wedding anniversaries. Then one of the members would head to the podium at the front of the room to deliver a speech on any memorable experience(s) they wished to share with the group. Each speaker's speech was videotaped. The content of the speeches tended to follow a pattern: a description of family life, educational background, careers, marriage, and Greek affiliations. The speeches lasted between 20 to 30 minutes and were followed by table discussions based on what was heard during the speech. The meetings then concluded with very competitive games of Bingo.

Two videotapes were produced of each speech given in front of the group. One tape was given to the speaker and the other tape was placed in the church library for public circulation. The practice of recording each member's life experiences began well before initiation of this study. I obtained permission to view the tapes recorded both prior to and during the study. A total of 30 videotapes were viewed and transcribed.

A book on the historical account of the local Greek community was also used for the study. A committee comprised of individuals from the community chronicled the first 100 years

of community life; comprising the 20th century. The book showcased the families/individuals (many of whom were study participants) responsible for the creation of the various social and religious organizations in the region.

Interviews were conducted with study participants using questions developed after reading the historical book, watching several of the videotapes, and making initial observations at two meetings. The questions were devised to help participants recall specific experiences that illustrated how they viewed themselves while living in the United States and how they believe their experiences have shaped their identities. The main interview question was, "What does it mean to you to be a Greek American? And are you satisfied with your Greek American identity?" The interview questions were designed to stimulate personal reflection on what part(s) of their heritage/culture they decided to assimilate into their new setting, and to gauge the impact of their decisions (see Appendix A).

Maxwell (1996) identified that "your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain that understanding" (p. 4). All participants responded to the interview questions; however, open-ended questions were also incorporated in the interviews to allow the participants to speak, or expand, on any topic of their choosing. The semi-structured format ensured that consistency was maintained while still allowing considerable flexibility in the scope and depth of the responses (Merriam, 2001; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

A letter of consent was signed by each participant interviewed. A copy of the letter of consent is provided in Appendix B. The interviews lasted from 45 – 90 minutes and were conducted at the church or in a mutually agreed upon setting, whichever location made the participant more comfortable. The interviews were tape-recorded while I made observer

comments and took hand-written notes on the participants' body language, voice patterns, etc. Tape-recorded sessions were transcribed by a service as soon as possible after the interview was completed and observer comments were added to the transcript where appropriate.

Organizing The Data

The data obtained through transcribed videotapes, interviews, and field notes were organized first into general categories and later into more specific categories as they pertained to the research questions. All documents were coded. The coded data became the basis for the data chapters.

Issues Of Validity

Because a qualitative study aims to explore a problem or describe a setting, social group, or a pattern of interaction, validity is critical (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study's validity is enhanced when I used in-depth descriptions to show the complexities of the processes and interactions with data derived from the setting. Data is valid within the parameters of the setting, chosen study population, and theoretical framework.

My Greek heritage was an essential component of this study. The seniors club only gives access to other people from the Greek community. I gained access to this group of seniors only after satisfying the priest of the Greek Orthodox Church and the president of the seniors club with my immigrant background and good standing in the Church. For instance, I was asked the location of my birthplace, where I went to church in America, if I speak Greek, and finally, why I wanted access to the club's members.

The validity of the study was enhanced by my ability to collect data in both Greek and English during the course of the meetings. A non-Greek speaking researcher would not have understood anything spoken in Greek and would have had to interrupt the Greek conversations to

request a translation. The continuity of the discussions would have been lost and nuances of the conversations would have been missed in second-hand translation.

However, my status as a first generation Greek immigrant could have been a limitation for the study. When one uses qualitative methods, "the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 57). As I entered into the lives of these seniors as a participant observer, I was very careful to keep this in mind. With every observation or field note written, I recorded my own reflections on past experiences in order to distinguish between what I observed with how I felt to ensure that the integrity of the study was maintained.

To maintain confidentiality in the study, pseudonyms were given to all those who participated either through interviews or side conversations at the Church. All study documents, including transcriptions and signed consent forms were stored in a secured location. The audio tapes used in the interview process were destroyed after transcription. The videotapes were the property of the church and were returned to the church after transcription.

Theoretical Framework

As the research was conducted, I collected and analyzed data in order to develop a "grounded theory." Bogdan and Biklen (1998) defined "grounded theory" as a theory that emerges over time by connecting pieces of data in an organized system (p. 160). This qualitative process differs from traditional quantitative methods as it does not start with a particular theory in mind that is tested by the data. In a qualitative study, the data determine the theory and methods used for analysis.

People identify themselves through the experiences they have had. These study participants are no different. When asked to speak about their lives, they chose to speak on certain events. Why were these events memorable enough to be mentioned? What was it about

those memories that made them so important in how they see themselves? Theories were needed to explore how the participants derived meaning from the experiences in order to determine what impact the experiences had in shaping their identity.

The participants spoke on experiences from childhood to events more recent in time. How does their current age effect the meaning they give their experiences? Does the meaning associated with earlier experiences remain unchanged with the passage of time? Theories were needed to explore how age influences the meaning given to the experiences.

The group speaker received immediate feedback from their peers, both verbal and non-verbal, as the experiences were compared and commented on by the group. Apparently, the group had their own views on what the experiences meant. How was the speaker influenced by the commentary? Theories were needed to explore how group interactions influenced the speaker's self-identity.

Finally, the church served as the setting for many of the participants' experiences. The church served as a cultural institution that has special meaning both religious and secular. How did this location/setting influence their identity development?

John Dewey's Critical Pragmatism (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Dewey, 1969-1991) served as the core theoretical framework for this study, as the theory speaks to how people derive meaning from interactions with their environment. This theory was useful in understanding not only how each study participant's past (and present) experiences shape their identity, but also why the study participants reacted to each other's life story presentations the way they did during subsequent table discussions.

People with a distinct ethnic identity maintain cultural ties through institutions. The Orthodox Church, for example, functions as both a religious center and a community center. The

church was a place to worship, to educate children in Greek studies and adults in English, and to hold social meetings- like the Seniors Club. Why were all of these events held at the church? How did the setting influence the meaning of their experiences? I used Fasching and deChant's concepts (2001) to explore how the environment affected the study participants' experiences.

Critical Pragmatism

Over the centuries, philosophers have debated the relationship between the mind and the environment. Are our thoughts influenced by our surroundings and the events that occur around us? Descartes, for instance, argued that you can separate doing from thinking. Dewey, on the other hand, said this was not possible; mind and matter are not separate and our thoughts and actions are influenced by our environment (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

Dewey (1922) proposed a philosophy of action to elucidate this point. He based his theory on a person's interactions with his environment; what Dewey calls transactions. Human action is always "the interaction between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social. The transaction is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process in which the organism seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with its ever-changing environment" (p. 9). By undergoing transactions with the environment, Dewey identified that the person acquires knowledge- with knowledge defined as the accumulated experiences in which a person has transacted successfully with his environment.

According to Dewey (1922), the most basic way to acquire knowledge is through the process of trial and error. Learning to ride a bike is a good example. A beginner can be told how to pedal, steer and balance their weight, but the information does not have meaning until they try it for themselves. After repeated attempts, and possibly a few bruises, they eventually succeed.

A person can move away from the trial and error approach, though, by performing symbolic operations- an activity Dewey calls thinking. When a person thinks, he uses the

acquired knowledge obtained from past successful transactions. Thinking allows the person to consider different lines of action without actually being subjected to the consequences of those lines of action, a sort of mental exercise where he can look at many possibilities and imagine what will happen if he transacts in that way with his environment. These lines of action can then be applied in future transactions.

The process of gaining knowledge; finding ways to successfully transact with the environment continues throughout a person's entire life. Accumulated experiences are reused, whenever possible, as they resulted in successful transactions in the past. Dewey (1922) classifies this repetitive use of accumulated experiences as "habits." A "habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts" (p. 32). In other words, a person develops a level of comfort within his environment and a level of confidence (or control) in his patterned responses to that environment.

Dewey (1925) says that our habits are the basis of how we acquire meaning. Meaning is a "property of behavior" (p. 141); it is the way in which the person responds to the environment. The experimental transaction of person and environment not only leads to more specific habits, but also results in a more differentiated and more meaningful world.

However, when conditions change, the person will have to interact with his environment in a different manner to re-establish the dynamic balance (Dewey, 1920). Habits from the past are not working in the new environment. "The organism acts in accordance with its own structure, simple or complex, upon its surroundings. As a consequence the changes produced in the environment react upon the organism and its activities. The living creature undergoes, suffers, the consequences of its own behavior. This close connection between doing and

suffering or undergoing forms is what we call experience" (p. 129). Under these conditions, Dewey says that the person will undergo a process of inquiry.

"Inquiry solves problems by a means of a transformation of the current situation into a new situation. Inquiry will never end" (Dewey, 1938, p. 42). Dewey (1909) presents a step by step analysis for effective inquiry that includes the following: a felt difficulty, its location and definition, a suggestion of possible solution, development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion, and further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection (pp. 246-337).

A natural starting point for inquiry is the situation in which there are conflicting habits; the situation in which we do not know how to respond. Finding out what is problematic about the indeterminate situation starts with collecting facts which "constitute the terms of the problem, because they are the conditions that must be reckoned with or taken account of in any relevant solution that is proposed" (Dewey, 1938, p. 113).

We develop ideas as to the nature of the problem. These ideas then give direction to our observations and help us develop suggested meanings of what is being observed. It is at this point that previously acquired knowledge enters into the process of inquiry, since it provides a network of possible conceptual operations, which have proven to be successful in the past. Although there is no guarantee that old knowledge will be successful for the solution of the problem at hand, it can at least suggest a variety of different approaches for understanding the situation, interpreting observations, and making it possible for intelligent action (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

It is only when we act on an idea that a relationship can be established between our ideas and the problem we are experiencing. This relationship will effect a change in the person's

habits. Inquiry then is the process in which reflection and action cooperate in order to restore coordination or resolve a conflict of habits (Dewey, 1909).

While each person transacts with the environment, there are always others also in transaction; we do not live in a vacuum. “Partners in interaction tend to create a shared, intersubjective world together” (Biesta G. , 1994). Dewey (1925) referred to this process of creating a shared world, as communication. Communication is not the simple transfer of information from one mind to another, but the practical coordination and reconstruction of individual patterns of action, in unity with other people (p. 66). Successful coordination requires that the partners in interaction react to the meaning of each other’s actions. Transactions are seen from a standpoint that is not strictly personal, but as common to all participants in an interaction.

Communication is made possible through the use of symbols. Dewey (1925) says that a symbol gains meaning “when its use establishes a genuine community of action” (p. 145). Meaning is therefore a “method of action,” it is “a way of using things as means to a shared consummation” (p. 147). A handshake is such a symbol. One person extends their hand with the expectation that the other person will shake it in greeting. The action of shaking hands is recognized by both parties as being symbolic of a verbal greeting.

Yet, while people are often acting in coordination with others, Dewey stated that “things are what they are experienced as” (1905, p. 158). People in the same transaction will have different experiences because they enter the transaction from a different standpoint, or a different background, or from a different history, and with different purposes and intentions.
Dewey (1905) would say that each individual’s experiences are valid because each individual creates their own meaning based on that experience. All depends on prior learning, that is, the

unique set of habits that each individual acquires over time. The same environmental conditions will not necessarily evoke the same response in different people (Dewey, 1905).

Dewey's pragmatism and his process of inquiry combine thinking with acting and supply a method to understand how each immigrant reacts with their new environment, where their pre-established habits didn't quite fit into their new setting (in America), and they had to create new habits for themselves, and in the process develop a new identity. Pragmatism allows us to look at how each individual's actions impacted their identity development, as well as the impact of shared interactions, such as the interactions observed at the seniors meetings.

Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach

Fasching and deChant (2001) state that we possess "tendencies that are at war in every person and in every community" (p. 10). Human "religiousness" is defined by two opposing types of experience that tend to shape the way stories are told and interpreted. Our understanding of good and evil is defined by the kind of story we think we are in and the role we see ourselves playing in that story. Fasching and deChant differentiate between what they call "the sacred" and "the holy." The terms "the sacred" or what one defines as good and "the holy" or what one defines as evil or profane, are proposed as names for opposing types of experience (p. 10).

"The sacred" defines a group of people who share a common identity and see themselves "as human while they see all others as profane or less than human. The sacred generates a morality expressed in narratives of mistrust and hostility toward the stranger"- those individuals who do not share a common identity with them (Fasching & deChant, 2001, p. 20). "The holy", by contrast, generates an ethic which questions every sacred morality that excludes the stranger. "Holy" acts are compassionate and just; they do not try to replace the morality of a society, but to "transform it by breaking down the divisions between the sacred and the profane, through

narratives of hospitality to the stranger, by affirming the human dignity of precisely those who do not share our identity or stories" (p. 20).

Fasching and deChant (2001) state that religion has always been about "what people hold sacred" (p. 10). To say "that something is sacred is to say that it matters more than anything else. And what typically matters most to people is their destiny -avoiding suffering and death and living meaningful and secure lives" (p. 10). Their response is embodied in a way of life meant to address these issues. Everywhere in the world what people seem to hold most sacred is their way of life and the powers they believe make such a life possible. "Although there are other possibilities, the word "religion" is most likely derived from the Latin religare, which means "to tie or bind." It expresses our sense of being "tied and bound" by relations of obligation to whatever powers we believe govern our destiny and secure our way of life -whether these powers be natural or supernatural, personal or impersonal, one or many" (p. 11).

Whatever powers people believe govern their destiny will elicit a religious response (Fasching & deChant, 2001). That is, it will inspire them "to tie or bind" themselves to these powers in relations of ritual obligation -a way of life that assures that these powers will be on their side. How do we know what our obligations to these powers are? Throughout history this knowledge has been communicated through myth and ritual. Our word "myth" comes from the Greek mythos, which means "story." "Myth", Fasching and deChant say, "is a symbolic story about the origins and destiny of human beings and their world, which relates them to whatever powers they believe ultimately, govern their destiny and explains to them what these powers expect of them. Ritual is the symbolic enactment of these stories whereby they are passed on from one generation to the next" (p. 12).

Myth and ritual are typically tied to the major festivals or holy days of a religious tradition, so that by celebrating a cycle of festivals spread throughout the year one comes to dwell in the stories that tell you who you are, where you came from, and where you are going (Fasching & deChant, 2001). As the story is retold, certain foods are eaten to remind the participants of what happened. Fasching and deChant use the example of receiving Holy Communion to illustrate this point. Holy Communion is not the literal reenactment of the Last Supper, but a symbolic one. Nevertheless, this symbolic reenactment is experienced as having the power to make one an actual participant in the original event of the Last Supper. "The distance between past and present is felt to dissolve," and the events of the Last Supper are felt to be "happening to me now." This is also true for reciting the brief history of each saint as they are celebrated on their specific day. The priest can remind his congregation of what it is like if you want to follow Christ, so that "each life has cosmic significance, helping to bring about the fulfillment of all things" (p. 12).

In this way, the myth and ritual perform a religious function – "they tie or bind the life of the individual into a great cosmic drama that gives life meaning and purpose, which is expressed in the Christian way of life. While this example focused on Christianity, this concept is true of the myths and rituals of all religions" (p. 13).

An important note is that religion is not only about going to church or believing in God. Religion, for Fasching and deChant (2001), is about whatever people hold sacred, especially their way of life. For them what is truly sacred is the highest good -that which provides them with meaning.

Fasching and deChant (2001) say that "religion, morality, and society are different faces of a single reality -a society's way of life expressed in sacred customs." They say that "while a

sacred society is founded on a shared set of answers that belong to the finite world of the way things are, a holy community is founded on experiences of openness to the infinite. The experience of the infinite is not an experience of something, but of a lack or absence that opens us up to seeing and acting on new possibilities" (pp. 19-20). This type of experience is expressed in our capacity for doubt. To be seized by doubt is to be seized by the holy.

While doubt tends to negate and undermine the way things are, it is not a purely negative force. The experience of doubt separates us from the world as it is in order to make it possible to imagine the world as it might be and/or ought to be. To the degree that we are willing to make a leap of faith and learn to trust our doubts, and follow the trail of questions they generate, we become open to the possible rather than remain a prisoner of the actual. We ask, "Why must things remain the way they are?" or "Why couldn't things be different?" Once we experience doubt and its questions, we are freed from the tyranny of "the way things are" (p. 20).

Fasching and deChant (2001) say that while "the center of a sacred society is within its boundaries and measured by all who share the same identity, in a holy community, the center is to be found paradoxically, outside its boundaries, in the stranger who is wholly other. Strangers and outcasts are those whose identity does not fit within the sacred order of things and consequently cannot be named or measured in its categories. A holy community is typically a subculture which functions as a "counterculture," an alternative community within a sacred society whose way of life calls that society's sacred order into question" (p. 20).

The distinction between "the sacred" and "the holy," is to help us sort out our human experiences and behavior. "The sacred" and "the holy" should be seen as opposing tendencies, or ways of experiencing life, to be found in all persons and all communities (whether they appear to be religious or not). Every actual culture and religion (indeed, every person's identity) is likely to

embody tendencies of both models -the sacred and the holy -in a complex and sometimes self-contradictory way of life (Fasching & deChant, 2001).

Chapter Three
St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church- A "Sacred" Institution

Introduction

St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church sat in a beautiful setting on a bluff overlooking a lake. Built in a style best described as neo-Byzantine, the church was a landmark in the area. The imposing dome, constructed of anodized aluminum, could be seen from all sides of the lake and further west. It also presented a dramatic overhead view for planes approaching the local airport. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church

Figure 2: Interior of St. Mary's

While the exterior of the dome was impressive, what was inside the dome was the most memorable. The interior of the dome was filled with icons done by Demetrios Dukas, an iconographer who trained under Photios Kontoglu, the artist who performed the restoration work on the Great Church of Aghia Sophia in Constantinople. While Dukas' icons might have appeared simple upon a precursory first glance, on closer inspection they appeared to possess a pure and serene quality. Many parishioners commented that the icons found in the dome: the four Evangelists painted around the Christ Pantocrator were highly inspirational and greatly aided their overall worship experience. "It's as if I am drawn closer to God when I enter my church," Veli sighed contently as we stood looking

at the icons (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

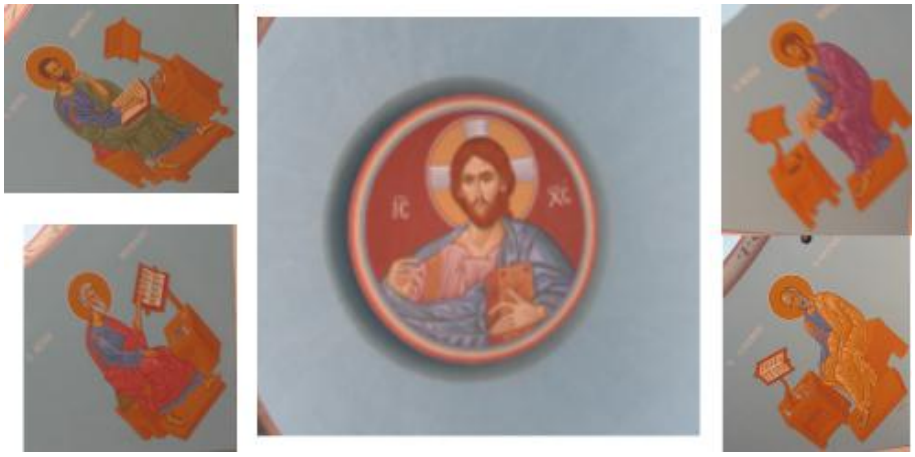

Figure 3: Interior Dome Iconography (Christ Pantocrator and Four Apostles)

According to Fasching and deChant (2001), the dome is a powerful symbol for the Greek community, whose members represent a "sacred" group of people who share a common identity; because they have lived similar experiences based on their Orthodox Faith.

The dome, along with dozens of icons- of Christ, the Virgin Mary, Angels, and the Saints are visible throughout the building and remind them not only of their Orthodox faith, but also of their *patrida* (mother country), for you cannot speak about what it is to be Greek without also mentioning the Greek Orthodox religion, which encompasses every facet of a Greek person's life.

A Brief History Of St. Mary's

The Greek immigrants, according to Fasching and deChant (2001), continue to practice their Orthodox faith because religion "ties or binds" them to what they hold most "sacred"- their way of life. It is important to note that the Orthodox Church in Constantinople was not originally involved in establishing churches in America. Around the turn of the 20th century, Greek immigrants from the region joined together to bring a priest from Greece to perform the liturgy,

give the sacraments of marriage and baptism, and to conduct funerals. The priest would travel to different communities every month; often holding the worship service in people's homes.

> They paid for his passage to America. I didn't like not having a church of my own, it didn't sit right with me, but we did have a priest come once a month from Minot, North Dakota to give us services. One month he went to this house and the next month he went to that house and that's how we went for quite a few years. (Damaris, life story presentation, July 25, 2006)

Other seniors chose to travel to locations that had Greek Orthodox Churches.

> There wasn't a Greek church in our community. When I was first growing up we had to go to the Greek Church in Sioux City, Iowa, which was 90 miles away if we wanted to go to church. However, the priest would come to our community one Sunday a month and do liturgy and where we had it was at the AHEPA, which is the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association – they had a building there that they used for rentals and then on Sundays we would have our church there. Now what the AHEPA did is they finally – with all the families – they went to the archdiocese and they asked for a priest and they said that we would have a church there and that it would be supported by the AHEPA money from the rentals. So they found a church across the street from the Lutheran college there, Augustana, and they converted it to a Greek church. (Tom, interview, November 30, 2006)

The community continued to grow, however, and enough money was raised to get a priest of their own.

> It was my father and his brothers who wrote back home to their village in Niata to find a priest. (Mara, interview, June 6, 2006)

The community then built a church in 1905 and named it St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church. It measured approximately 50 feet by 23 feet and accommodated a small congregation of about 150 Greeks.

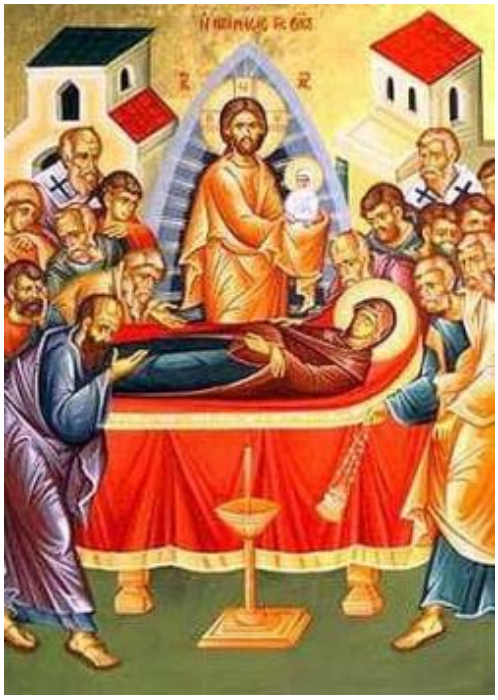

Figure 4: Icon of The Dormition

St. Mary's was not a name customarily given to Greek Orthodox churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who was more commonly referred to as the "Theotokos" (Mother of God) or the "Panayia" (Over all the Saints). Rather, the churches were named after one of the feast days relating to the Virgin Mary; "Evangelismos" (The Annunciation), The Nativity, or "Koimisis" (The Dormition, or Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary) as shown in Figure 4.

The parish selected "Koimisis" as its feast day, which took place on August 15th. However, the parish looked to the first Orthodox Church in the area, St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church, for its English name. This church was also dedicated to the Mother of God, so the Greeks decided to follow their example and name their church just simply "St. Mary's."

A second building was constructed a few years later after the land on which the first church sat was appropriated by a local university. The Greek population worshipped at the second church for close to 45 years, until 1955. The community was growing, however, and a larger facility was needed.

> Our fathers had a vision. They were very religious. They loved their families. They loved the Greek community and they knew that we had to have a church. They wanted to build THIS church [he gestured with his hands to indicate this structure and placed more emphasis on the word THIS] and they were all of one mind. So they together, they worked hard day and night to purchase the land. (Michael, life story presentation, July 5, 2005)

The congregation elected a building search committee that was led by Nick. The committee was actively pursuing several new sites when Nick discovered that land around the lake had been put up for sale. While the committee thought the site was perfect, they felt the price of the land was beyond their means. The price did not deter Nick. With his financial assistance, the land was purchased and the church was built in 1955. This was the facility where the study was conducted.

Michael gave Nick all of the credit for the fact that St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church existed at this location.

> I remember Nick, bless his soul, [he crossed himself and I see that others in attendance do likewise] he would walk around the church as it was being built to inspect the foundation. Years later after it was built, he would stop by after work and he himself would get out the hose and walk around watering the flowers. I know this, because I saw him do it! [He poked himself in the chest and stared out into the audience] He would spend hours here [again he gestured with his hands]. He loved St. Mary's. (Michael, life story presentation, July 5, 2005)

I heard many seniors proclaim from the audience, "Yes he did!" Michael smiled out at them and he too proclaimed, "Yes, he did." I heard Veli solemnly say, "May his memory be eternal." "May his memory be eternal," all the seniors responded in unison with heads bowed.

Description Of Facilities At St. Mary's

With all of the renovations and additions completed from 1955 to the time of the study, the building had an interior area of over 31,000 square feet. The nave of St. Mary's seated 600, but could accommodate 680 using its overflow space. At the northwest corner of the nave was a small chapel (no longer used), originally used for baptisms and small weddings. On the southwest corner of the nave was an enclosed infants' room with a sound system, and a glass-paned east wall that enabled its users to both see and hear the services. At the east end of the nave, on either side of the altar area, were the choir room (south), and a sacristy and confessional (north).

The church school facilities, in the south wing, served 225 students. Two stories of class rooms faced westward over the lake, a youth room had its own outside patio, and a lecture room had kitchen facilities. Included here were also the administrative offices, the priest's office, a secretarial-reception area and a library (See Figure 5).

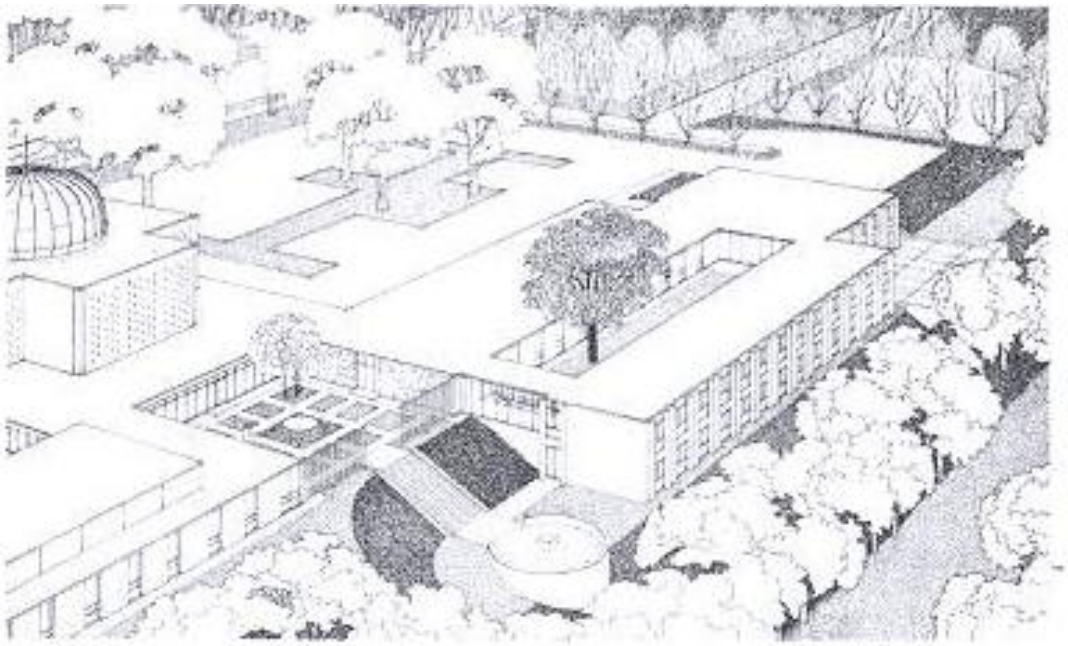

Figure 5: Church School Facilities

The kitchen was located in the north wing. It was well equipped with every modern day appliance, including two large walk-in refrigerator and freezer units. It could be accessed either through a Great room (called the Terrace Room) with an open area of about 625 square yards which could easily sit 120 people, or through a large auditorium/ gymnasium that housed a regulation size basketball court and could be used as a social hall with either auditorium seating for 700, or banquet seating for 600. The Terrace Room was a multi-functional room used for both religious and secular activities, as needed.

A beautifully landscaped courtyard separated the north and south wings could be accessed from both wings and the nave. Outdoor stairs led from the courtyard to another landscaped setting further down the bluff.

The congregation purchased adjoining properties to the original two acre site in 1999. The lot purchased on the south side of the property was used for parking, with access to the parish house as well as the street. The congregation also purchased a small house just north of

the parish house that will eventually be removed for additional parking space. See Figure 6 for an aerial view of the buildings and grounds.

Figure 6: St. Mary's Buildings and Grounds

While the dome acted as a primary symbol, two secondary works exist on the grounds outside of the church to remind members of the Greek community of their Orthodox faith: the first was a stone altar, and the second was an ornamental water fountain. According to Fasching and deChant (2001), myths are told by people to empower totems. A myth is a symbolic story about the origins and destiny of humans and their world. Myths are typically tied to the major festivals or holy days of a religious tradition, so that by celebrating a cycle of festivals spread throughout the year one comes to dwell in the stories that tell you who you are, where you came

from, and where you are going (p. 12). These structures served this purpose for the Greeks of St. Mary's. I discovered the meaning of each structure by reading the book, *The First One Hundred Years of St. Mary's*.

The Stone Altar was located in the landscaped area below the courtyard. Imbedded in the surface of the altar are four stones representing the story of the Christian Faith and the Greek Church (Boosalis, 2000). The first stone was from Bethlehem where Jesus Christ was born. The second stone came from Jerusalem, the site of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the basis of the Greek Orthodox faith. The third stone of Greek marble came from Athens and represented Greece, the land of the founders of the church. The fourth stone was from the Patriarchate in Constantinople, where the Mother Church of Orthodoxy was located and where the Patriarch presided. Each stone was engraved with its place of origin, i.e. the stone from Athens came from Mars Hill where Paul first addressed the Athenians about the new faith in Christ. The locale "ATHENAI" was engraved in a classical Greek style by an Athenian stonecutter (2000, p. 24).

The second structure was a work of art by the sculptor Paul Granlund, commissioned by George Legeros (see Figure 7). The first part of the fountain was erected in 1959, in memory of his young son. The second part of the statue was erected in 1976, in memory of his wife. It was located on the west side of the church, in the courtyard directly outside the narthex. The sculpture was poised above

Figure 7: Courtyard Sculpture, Palindrome

the fountain. It showed two aspects of a single maiden – the first as a kneeling figure and the other as a figure in flight, with both maidens sharing a single head. The bronze base of the fountain was carved with a palindrome, that when liberally translated read, "As one's face is washed, so should one's iniquities be cleansed" (2000, p. 26). The sculpture symbolized two states of being for one person: in the first state a girl is kneeling to wash her face, while at the same time her sins are being washed away, and she soars upward as a spirit set free, cleansed of sin (2000, p. 26).

Church Life Of St. Mary's: The Ritual Of A "Sacred" People Is Being Challenged

Figure 8: Sunday Liturgy

In the previous section, I mentioned that the word "myth" means story. Fasching and deChant (2001) say that people "tell stories about their origins and destiny" as they relate to whatever powers they believe ultimately govern over them. People will perform rituals, or symbolic enactments of these stories to strenthen their beliefs. The Orthodox liturgy along with numerous programs available at the church served this function.

At the time of this study, more than 550 families called St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church their church home. The Mission Statement of St. Mary's was to proclaim, celebrate, and share the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ in accordance with the Orthodox Tradition (St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, 2008). In conjunction to the mission statement, were the five tasks of the church. The first was to ***Hear*** the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ

(preaching, evangelism, and mission). The second was to ***Pray*** in order to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit (worship, the Sacraments, and fasting). The third was to ***Grow*** in knowledge by learning the new life in Christ and the Orthodox Tradition (catechism, Bible study, and education). The fourth was to ***Serve*** the poor, suffering, and needy, and bear witness to the Kingdom of God by working for social and economic justice. And the fifth was to ***Share*** our lives with each other (fellowship, meals, social and cultural events) (2008).

St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church offered a wide variety of educational opportunities throughout the year. These included adult and youth education, lecture series, bible study, retreats, and resources to help develop a greater understanding of the Orthodox Church and to help one live the faith. These programs were originally put into place to assist Greek immigrant families. Admittance was later given to individuals of non-Greek descent (usually women), for example, who married into Greek families in order to learn more about the Orthodox faith.

Another example was the "Introduction to Orthodox Christianity" class, which was offered to educate all individuals who wished to join the Orthodox faith- regardless of whether or not they were Greek. This class represented a remarkable fundamental shift in paradigm, because by offering this class, the priests of the church moved away from a "sacred" ethnocentric traditional stance that only served the Greeks in the community, to a more "holy" or inclusive one that Fasching and deChant (2001) say is hospitable to the stranger.

The number of Greek families was still in the majority, but more non-Greek families chose to worship at St. Mary's. The priest of St. Mary's, Father Gabriel, informed me

> Over the past 10 years, many Serbians have joined our church. I think this is wonderful having so many people wanting to worship. (Father Gabriel, interview, April 12, 2005)

He told me that the church was continuing to grow and that he felt "blessed that so many people have chosen St. Mary's." By inviting strangers into the church, Father Gabriel has broken from the "sacred" tendencies of the Greek community that proclaim, "The way things are is the way they always ought to be" (Fasching & deChant, 2001)

Fasching and deChant (2001) say that the center of a sacred society is found within its boundaries and is measured by all who share the same identity. In a holy community, the center is to be found outside of its boundaries, in the stranger who is wholly other. Strangers are those whose identity does not fit within the sacred order of things. A holy community is a subculture which functions as a "counterculture," an alternative community within a sacred society whose life calls that society's sacred order into question (p. 20). Father Gabriel was a change agent. Unfortunately, not everyone in the Greek community agreed with Father Gabriel's decision. Kunkelman (1990) and Rouvelas (2002) have pointed out that Greek Orthodoxy is inextricably tied to Greek Ethnicity; the seniors feel that their ethnic values and traditions are being threatened.

Transforming The Church From A "Sacred" Society Into a "Holy" Community

When I attended Sunday Liturgy at St. Mary's, the first thing I noticed was that I could understand almost all of the service. Everyone, including the Priests, Deacon, Chanter, and Choir predominantly used English throughout the service. During those times that ancient Greek was used, I could rely on a liturgical book found in the pew to help me follow along. This was a pleasant surprise, because the church services I attended while growing up in Pittsburgh were conducted entirely in ancient Greek. Even though I could speak and read Modern Greek, Ancient Greek was much more difficult to understand.

I commented to one of the seniors, Toula, that I really enjoyed the service because, for the first time in my life, I could understand what was being said during the liturgy. The look she

gave me told me exactly what she thought about the use of English in the liturgy. She didn't like it one bit.

> Listen, I love the service. I'm happy we have more people [non Greek] attending. To me, it's not the same, okay? It's not the way we did it. I know it has to be. I know.

Her response was very animated and included the shrugging of her shoulders and waving her arms to accentuate her point. Agape also commented on the service.

> I remember going to church with my parents. Listening to the beautiful hymns sung in Greek. The priest reading the Gospel [in Greek]. Now I sit quietly. I listen. I remember...[paused] But, I also see the small children. I see them sit with their pappous (grandfathers) and yiayias (grandmothers). Father Gabriel says the children are welcome in church. They understand English. It is good.

These seniors were used to attending church where the liturgy was entirely in ancient Greek, first with their parents (as children) and then as adults with their own families. Now as seniors, they witnessed the church moving away from this practice. The priests recited the liturgy mostly in English, with a scattering of Greek from time to time; even the sermon was in English. Why had the language of the liturgy changed?

> My dad, he really tried, even threatened me, it didn't work. I wanted nothing to do with Greek school. Sure we spoke Greek in the house, mamma would only talk to us in Greek, but as I got older I spoke less. Sure I can still speak now, but my kids, no, never bothered to teach them. I like coming to church. The service, it's beautiful. It's rich in tradition and I can understand what's going on. My grandkids when they come home from school can sit with us and understand what's going on. (Nick, life story presentation)

> We have many non-Greek families joining the church. This is their church too. Everyone knows English, not so with Greek. (Father Gabriel)

Almost everyone belonging to later generations (that is everyone younger than these seniors) felt that the change was long overdue! Even Father Gabriel shared this opinion while presenting his life's story speech at one of the seniors meetings.

> I remember the rich experiences of the church although quite honestly a lot of church was boring to me since the liturgy was in Greek and I didn't know any Greek and we were in church school during the liturgy. I did become an altar boy and enjoyed serving that way. I served as I grew up. (Father Gabriel)

Now as the head priest of St. Mary's, he liked the fact that he could work with members of the congregation to make changes.

> I discovered that as I kind of peeked into the whole situation here that there were certainly some progressive elements to this parish. The openness to change and doing things differently, that's here! (Father Gabriel, life story presentation)

I noticed two seniors shaking their heads "no" in reaction to this statement and overheard two seniors whisper at the table where I was sitting.

> There goes our church! What's he planning? We have to talk to Damaris about this. She'll know what to do.

While they were whispering (in voices loud enough to be heard), I heard another senior turn to them and say.

> I like what Father Gabriel is doing. My Tony came to visit, brought the kids, we came to church and I loved it. The service is beautiful, I don't care what language Father Gabriel uses. My grandkids, they participated because they understood. That's important to me. (Harriett)

By this time, all eight seniors sitting around the large table had heard the three talking. Looking around the table, I could see how torn the seniors felt at having to change the language of the liturgy based on who was in attendance.

> That's how it has to be. Father Gabriel understands this. Our church is growing. Don't you agree it's a good thing? [He waits and looks around the table making

> eye contact with everyone. Everyone said, "yes," or nodded in agreement.] Okay, be glad. It's okay. [He smiled reassuringly at them and I sensed that they felt better, because many returned his smile or patted each other's arms] (Tom)

Toula shrugged her shoulders.

> I know that's how it's got to be! Who doesn't? I just miss the old days.

Tom added the following while patting her on the arm.

> We all miss the old days. [He looked at all the seniors sitting around the table] Toula's right. It's just another change. And this one's good." [He nodded and the others returned his nod, or smiled in his direction.]

Fasching and deChant (2001) suggested that we possess "tendencies that are at war in every person and in every community" (p. 10). They used the terms "sacred" and "holy" to differentiate between these warring tendencies. The previous statements and discussions by the seniors confirm this struggle within the ranks of the seniors. Some of the seniors, like Tom, embraced the change more readily than the others and in the end they like Father Gabriel, became facilitators of the change.

Language was not the only change in the church worship service mentioned by the seniors. The traditional Greek Orthodox service tended to run on the long side. With Orthros starting at 8:30 followed by the Divine Liturgy at 9:30, the service was not usually over until sometime after 11:00. The younger generation(s), particularly families with young children, often arrived well after the service had started while the seniors tended to arrive promptly and dressed up for the occasion. On Sunday mornings, you could hear them comment to anyone within ear shot (regardless of whether or not they wanted to hear). Toula, for example, had no problem letting people know that there were certain protocols that had to be followed.

> People should arrive on time, dress the part; men in suits and women in dresses. Parents should control their children, or take them to the nursery.

Toula wants the seniors to be in an environment where they "can worship with reverence…" She does not like it when "people parade in whenever they like…" and what was worse "the priest gives them communion every Sunday!" Growing up, I remembered receiving Holy Communion after, what seemed to me, a very strict fast, and then only on special Holy Days, maybe two or three times a year. The seniors did not understand why Holy Communion was taken so frequently; in other words, every week.

> Are you going to tell me they fasted? Every week? I see the same people in line every Sunday! No.

I observed firsthand how these seniors struggled with the changing worship service. They debated the merits of the change, and while some still missed the "good old days," as Toula told the seniors around her table- with agreement from many, they also realized the benefits that change had brought. They still hated the distraction of people arriving late (with loud children) and then only to receive Holy Communion. Yet, they loved to attend church with their families- especially with grandchildren who did not speak Greek; they beamed with pride when walking with their grandchildren to receive Holy Communion. Their contradictory statements, however, indicated that they were not really sure how they should have felt as they tried to reconcile the past with the present.

Fasching and deChant (2001) say that "religion, morality, and society are different faces of a single reality- a society's way of life expressed in sacred customs" (p. 11). They say that "while a sacred society is founded on a shared set of answers that belong to the finite word of the way things are, a holy community is founded on experiences of openness to the infinite. The experience of the infinite is not an experience of something, but of a lack or absence that opens us up to seeing and acting on new possibilities." This type of experience is expressed in our

capacity for doubt; to be seized by doubt is to seized by the holy. The experience of doubt separates us from the world as it is in order to make it possible to imagine the world as it might be. We can ask, "Why must things remain the way they are?" or "Why couldn't things be different?" These seniors struggled and were slow to accept the changes, even after recognizing that their own families would benefit from changes in the church liturgy.

Fasching and deChant (2001) emphasized that religion is not only about going to church or believing in God. Religion is also about whatever people hold sacred; especially their way of life and what is truly sacred is the highest good- that which provides them with meaning. As Pavlos told me, "we love to gather and talk about what is important to us; our church, our community. It really is a healthy thing to do; you know to speak about these things."

The seniors liked to reminisce about how they had used the church building in the past. For example, when I asked Pavlos, "Was it important to you to live near and attend St. Mary's church when you moved here?" His response indicated that the church was important to his family for more than just the religious benefits.

> Well obviously I think we needed a church where the kids – we wanted them to go to Sunday School and to Greek School and to meet other Greeks because a church in the United States is not only a religious institution, it's a social institution. It brings the Greeks together and now, of course, we have a lot of converts but nevertheless, still it's kind of a . . . it's maybe not as tight as the Jewish community, but nevertheless it's a social. You have these social groups, they come Sunday, they go to the liturgy and they get to socialize at least once a week.

Toula confirmed as much in her interview when I asked her the same question.

> Throughout my childhood, my parents always taught me to be an active member in the church community as well as the greater community and I tried to listen to their advice carefully. The church is where they came to worship, and to be with other Greeks, to gather at picnics, to dance and sing. Greeks don't need reason to celebrate. Now we do the same. I have been a member of the church choir for many years, president of Philoptochos Society, which is great. A long-time

> member of the Daughters of the Penelope … I have also chaired and have actively participated in many fund raising and social community activities throughout my life. These organizations are an important part of my life.

Michael mentioned several organizations that were held at the Church.

> That's when the youth club started at St. Mary's and then later we had GOYA, The Greek Orthodox Youth Association. Our parents wanted a safe place for us kids. Then AHEPA, the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, became active. They saw the need to preserve the culture but also to stress our ties with America. Most of our families all became a part of the AHEPA one way or another and all of those guys that went into the service when we came back from world war II joined the Hellenic post and the reason we joined the Hellenic post because the world war I veterans that were all Greek immigrants that came to America when the war broke out they wanted to join the army because they knew that if they joined the army when they got discharged they would automatically get their American citizenship papers, which is exactly what happened and Hellenic post was founded in 1919, by these Greek immigrants and it is still going today what is it our 84th year?

Many of the stories told during the life story presentations were quite similar, in that they all took place in the church. From an early age, these seniors came to the church with their parents and relatives, not only for Sunday morning worship, but to also celebrate Orthodox (religious) and Greek (ethnic secular) holidays. They came to the church for Sunday school and Greek school; to learn to read and write Greek (modern) and to learn about Greek history and Greek culture. As adults, they sent their children to do the same.

The seniors remembered going to St. Mary's as teenagers to socialize with other Greek teens in the community. They would meet on Friday and Saturday afternoons and evenings to play table tennis (yes, some even challenged the priest), shoot hoops, or just sit around to talk. Dances were held later in the evening; all under the watchful eye of community chaperones! See Figure 9. The seniors recalled having chaperones everywhere they went; some expressed being exasperated at always being followed or watched while on dates. Ultimately, however, the

seniors would shrug and say, "Well that's just how things were for everyone" (Michael, life story presentation, July 5, 2005). As adults, they used their talents to serve within the Greek community.

Figure 9: A dance in St. Mary's social hall

> I learned to do the quarterly reports for employee salaries and the holding accounts. That's when my interest in bookkeeping took off. I later became treasurer of many organizations both local and at the state level. (Janet)

After Janet had finished her speech, Veli added the following information.

> But I want you to know that Janet has been a part of our church community for many, many years. She's been treasurer, she's been an officer in the American Legion, and for the seniors she was treasurer for many years.

The seniors created the organizations at the church, so it only seemed natural for them to also hold their seniors meetings there. The building had always been the logical place to hold any event, whether religious or secular.

St. Mary's: A Nexus For The "Sacred' And The "Holy"

Fasching and deChant (2001) posited warring tendencies can be found in every community; this community is no different. One of the earliest concerns (and area of tension) within the Greek community involved the marriage of Greek men with non-Greek women. While a small number of Greeks did not mind if their children were to marry non-Greeks, the majority of the community was very strict when it came to whom one could marry; only Greek. Everyone knew the rules, but there were very few Greek women in America, and not every Greek man could afford to find a bride in Greece and then bring her to America.

These seniors vividly remembered what it was like; they experienced firsthand the strict rules of having to date and marry only other Greeks, and what could happen when one of their own did not follow the rules. The lesson was tragic.

> We had a tragic thing happen in our family. Absolutely tragic. My dad had four brothers and a sister here in this country – he had a couple more over in Greece. And the oldest brother when he was here – and in those days, like Petros [her husband] said there weren't a lot of Greeks. He married a Syrian lady and he married her and they had eight children but because she was Syrian, Uncle Steve, I guess was having some business problems too, plus his wife did not feel accepted by my aunts and uncles or whoever they were at that time – we're talking back now almost 100 years. And she felt so terrible and so neglected and her life was a little different because she was carrying on her own traditions and so she would come, I guess, and feel very inferior. My Uncle Steve, took out a gun one night and they say – they say . . . it was in the papers, I guess – and he killed himself. He killed himself in front of four of their children. So anyway, that was one of the things – you see here . . . yeah, because she wasn't Greek. (Veli)

The community responded by starting the Acropolis Club- the earliest social club to originate at St. Mary's. This club functioned as a counterculture that gave Greek/non-Greek married couples a place to socialize and feel included within the Greek community, because it was evident that the trend of Greek men marrying non-Greek women would continue regardless of the community's preferences. The use of the church by organizations, such as the Acropolis Club, underscored the importance of the building as a center of change where the stranger could take refuge within the Greek community.

St. Mary's Prepared The Greek Immigrant To Enter Into Mainstream American Society

Another one of the earliest social organizations started at St. Mary's was Elpis (meaning hope). This was a service organization founded in 1910 to help newly arrived immigrant women acculturate into American society. While the Greeks within the community tended to resist change from within their boundaries, they recognized that sooner or later its members would

have to interact with non-Greeks in mainstream America to conduct business transactions. Instead of allowing the stranger to enter into their community, the Greeks left the confines of their community to interact with strangers outside of their community. Roles were reversed!

This group went on to become the foundation for the Ladies Philoptochos Society, the official women's philanthropic organization of the Greek Orthodox Church, introduced in 1932 by the late Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. As with Elpis, their primary mission was to help immigrant women adjust to their new country. One of the seniors explained to me why the work of the Philoptochos was so important.

> They were so alone [the Greek immigrant women]. Imagine leaving your home [land], coming to America, no friends, not knowing the language, everything was different. Waiting for your man to come home. We got them out of the house. We taught them English, to read and write. They were strong, willing to learn. (Mara)

Philoptochos continues to fulfill their philanthropic mission, often working hand-in-hand with local priests to assist those in the community that are in need.

St. Mary's As A Preserver Of The Greek Mythos

Fasching and deChant (2001) say our word "myth" comes from the Greek word mythos which means "story," and that myth is a symbolic story about the origins of man. And that rituals are the symbolic enactments of these stories which are passed on from one generation to the next. The seniors remembered participating in such re-enactments as child-actors while attending Greek school to re-enact important events from Greek history.

A close affinity between a Greek and his church exists; it can be traced back about three hundred years, to when Greece was under Ottoman occupation (Kunkelman, 1990). At that time, schools were abolished and books were destroyed, as education was banned. When everyone feared Hellenism would be lost forever, the church quietly stepped in and became the primary force for the preservation of all that was Greek. Greeks would meet in churches, not just to

worship, but to also learn about their culture from the priests. The priests hid books in churches and secretly taught both the young and old, even under penalty of death. The Church would not let the Greeks forget their heritage and explained why Greek Orthodoxy and Greek nationalism became inextricably linked. As Agape mentioned this in front of the seniors during the telling of her life story, she held up childhood pictures of her dressed in ethnic Greek clothing.

> Every day at 3 [o'clock] I would run home, leave my books, grab my Greek school books, kiss my mom and run down the street with the other children to Greek school. Greek school ran every single day from 4-6:30 and Saturday from 9-1:30. To make money for the church we danced and gave plays like most of you. We made money that way. The children would give plays on history, and even the adults would give plays on Greek mythology. Here is a picture of Greek school and the title of this is Authanasios Theagos. [A. Theagos is mentioned every March 25th when Greeks celebrate Greek Independence Day] He was a young Greek warrior- hero and here I was in the center of the picture. I am playing his mama. I am on my knees and I'm begging the Turk ruler, asking for the release of my son who he held hostage and in chains and here on the side is my Greek school teacher.

As Agape held the picture in front of her to show the seniors, I heard "ahas" from the audience affirming that what Agape said was true. The plays would be held on Sunday afternoon after the church service in the church hall. Every Greek child participated in the plays; no child was left out.

Greek Independence Day was celebrated on March 25th, the day also set aside to celebrate the Annunciation of the Theotokos (the day that the Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear a child). On this holiest of days for Greek Orthodox Christians, Bishop Germanos of Patras was inspired to raise the banner of revolution in an act of defiance against the Turks; the act that marked the beginning of the War of Independence.

In America, as in Greece three hundred years ago, the newly arrived immigrants turned to the church to preserve their Hellenism from the influence of American culture. They may have

been thousands of miles away from their *patrida* (homeland), but they could find solace in the familiar surroundings of their church. As Pavlos continued during his interview,

> As it was in Greece, it is here. We expect our children to retain the Greek culture. To know the language. To know our rich traditions. To celebrate our independence. What better place to teach Greek school? At our church is where we send our children to learn these things.

Chapter Four

The Seniors Club Meetings: A "Sacred" Gathering Of A "Holy" People

Fasching and deChant (2001) use the term "sacred" to define a group of people who have lived similar experiences, and therefore share a common identity. In Chapter Three, "sacred" was used to describe how the Greek immigrants depended on their church; St. Mary's for religious reasons. An issue of concern was that Father Gabriel had created a counterculture that interfered in the "sacred" way that they had always worshipped; by allowing non-Greeks to not only become members of their church but that he also switched the liturgy from Greek to English to accommodate the non-Greek speakers. Furthermore, traditional customs of when one should receive Holy Communion (following proper fasting requirements) along with how one should act in church frustrated the seniors who adhered to: getting to church on time, dressing appropriately (men in suits, women in dresses), and especially leaving disruptive children in the sound-proof nursery.

Religion, morality, and society, Fasching and deChant (2001) state are different faces of a single reality- a society's way of life expressed in sacred customs. Religion therefore is not only about going to church or believing in God, it is also about whatever people hold sacred, especially their way of life. I ended Chapter Three with examples of how the seniors had used the building known as St. Mary's throughout the different stages in their lives; from childhood to adulthood, to maintain their Greek identity or more importantly their way of life.

Chapter Four continues on the latter theme, that the seniors of St. Mary's are currently using their church for secular reasons-to hold their seniors club meetings. The seniors met once a month in the Terrace Room of St. Mary's to participate in activities to have fun, catch up with friends, celebrate life's events, and navigate the changes associated with aging in a safe and

controlled environment. Interestingly, although the seniors strongly resisted changes to their church service, they were very willing to blend both Greek and American traditions during their meetings.

Every meeting followed a similar pattern, so all events described in this chapter were representative of observations made throughout the study. The layout of the room for the senior club meetings is shown in Figure 10.

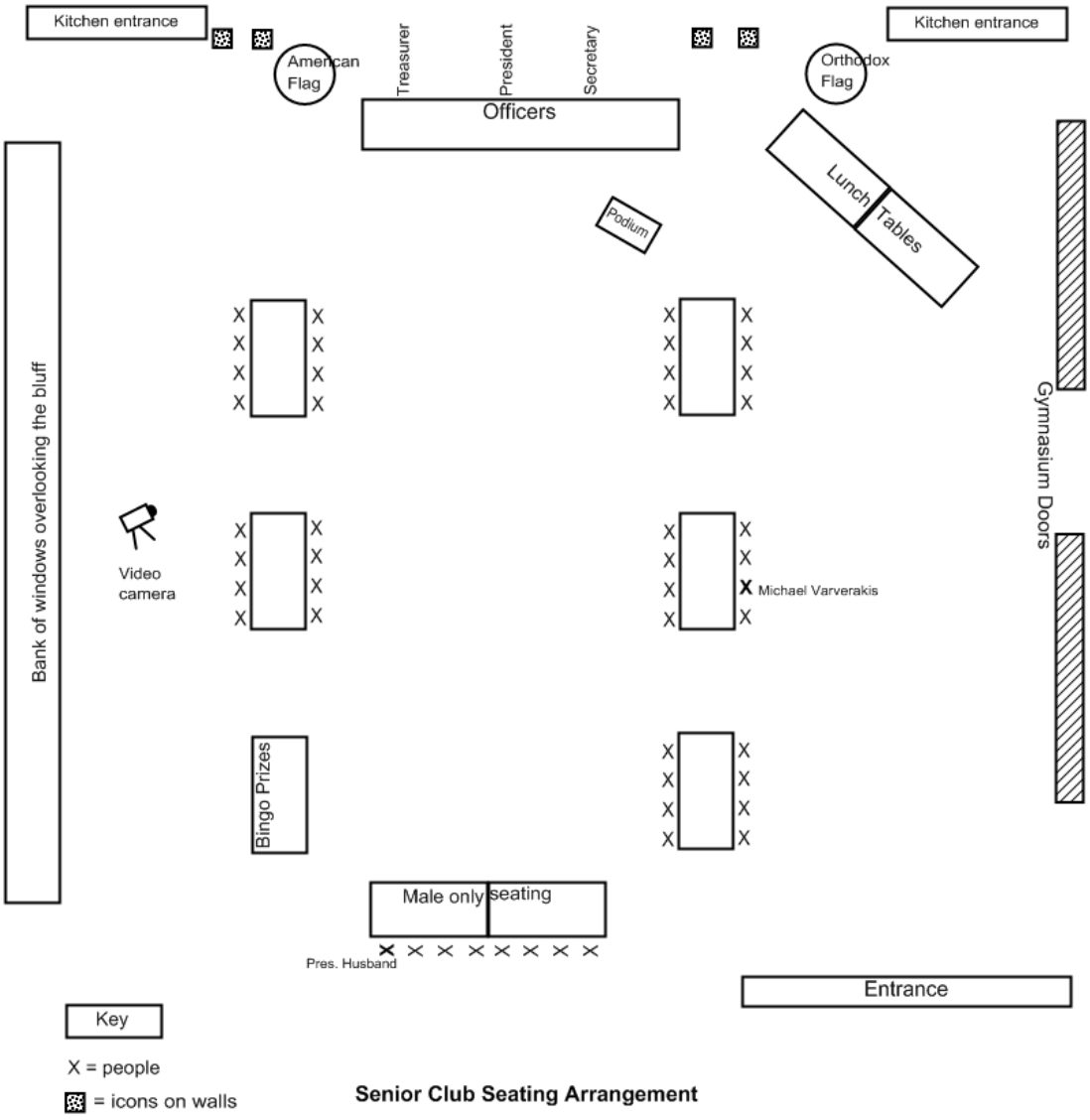

Figure 10: Terrace Room

The Seniors Arrived To The Meetings

Veli was the president of the Seniors Club. She knew all the members and made it a point to greet each of them at the door with a smile. Veli's smile was contagious; the seniors would smile in return and gladly exchanged hugs with her as she helped them to their seats. Veli constantly addressed members as 'kiddo,' a term of endearment that frequently got a laugh from the recipient; her caring and energetic attitude kick-started each meeting. Most of the seniors are bilingual, but Veli always greeted the seniors in English, she would switch to Greek only if a senior responded to her greeting in Greek.

A boisterous senior yelled out Veli's name as she walked through the door, "Did you miss me, Veli?" She matched his enthusiasm with a playful "Yes, it's about time you got here. What's kept you?" The banter continued as she walked him to his seat. Another senior called out from the door. "Hi Veli, how was your trip?" "I can hardly wait to tell everyone about it, Nitsa! Petros [Veli's husband] and I had a wonderful time. Didn't we Petros?" Veli said. "We sure did," confirmed Petros.

Most of the encounters I observed were upbeat and positive; almost celebratory in nature. There were a few members, however, who arrived at the meetings with a less positive outlook. One such person was Ourania.

Ourania walked slowly through the door using a walker. Veli saw her from across the room, took a deep breath, painted a smile on her face, and yelled out, "Ourania, how are you kiddo?" Ourania exclaimed "I hate being old!" Veli just nodded sadly and shrugged her shoulders, "Yes, I know how crummy it is to get old, kiddo!" Before Ourania could perpetuate that line of thinking, Veli quickly added, "It is so good to see you!" Ourania nodded her head and responded, "It's good to see you too, Veli." Veli continued to smile at Ourania, patted her on the

shoulder, and then gently guided her to her seat. Veli then whispered something in Ourania's ear. I couldn't hear what she said, but heard Ourania laugh and pull away.

Veli treated each senior, as if they were the guest of honor. As she escorted a senior to their seat, she would get the attention of those already seated and bring them all into the conversation. If the people at the table did not know the newly arrived senior, Veli would make introductions and chat until all were at ease. She would then fly back to the door to repeat this process for the next senior that arrived.

Describing The Seniors

The seniors got settled in their seats and immediately began to get reacquainted with those around them. Most seniors caught up quickly, as they had just seen each other in church the previous Sunday. Some seniors, however, were members of other Orthodox parishes and only came to St. Mary's for the senior meetings, or had been away for an extended period due to poor health, and getting reacquainted was much more involved. Most conversations were in English, but some were in Greek, while others were a mix of both Greek and English. Most of those who spoke in English had heavy accents, but could be understood. Evidently only Greek had to be spoken during the church service; because in this environment no one had a problem speaking in English or having others of their group speak in English.

The seniors were not easily identified as being of Greek descent based on appearance. For instance, most of the men were clean shaven; only one man sported the long twisted moustaches that one would have recognized from the movie "Zorba the Greek," and only a few of the men openly played with their 'koboloi,' (worry beads). Overall, the men were dressed in non-descriptive clothing, their ethnicity hidden behind the likes of Dockers® pants, Polo® shirts, and London Fog® windbreakers. The only indicators of their Greek heritage were the gold chains

with either crucifixes or medals depicting the Virgin Mary around their necks, and the wedding bands worn on their right hand (traditional in Greek Orthodox wedding ceremonies).

Most of the women also wore non-descriptive clothing of no particular brand- nothing that shouted "look at me, I'm Greek." A few women, however, did wear nicer t-shirts or upscale sweat shirts with ethnic symbols such as the Greek "key" design around collars and cuffs, or with images such as the Parthenon or advertisements for local Greek restaurants on the front. Almost all of the ladies wore gold jewelry. The Greek "key" design could be seen on everything from earrings and rings to necklaces. Greek "Lyra" coin rings and necklaces were also common. Only two or three women followed Greek tradition and dressed entirely in black in memory of their departed spouse. These women wore only their wedding band and a small gold cross around their neck. The seniors are pictured in Figure 11.

Figure 11: The seniors of St. Mary's

A "Sacred" Scene Right Out Of Greek Village Life

Fasching and deChant (2001) say that we tell stories to remember our origins and give our lives meaning, to help us find our place in the world. We undergo rituals, which are symbolic enactments of the stories we tell, to solidify our membership within a group.

These seniors undergo both religious and secular rituals. While receiving Holy Communion is a symbolic religious enactment of the Last Supper for the seniors partaking in the ritual (please refer to Chapter Three), they also exhibited secular ritualistic behaviors during the meetings. The following description of a secular ritual exemplified this groups' desire to stay connected to their ancestral roots back in Greece.

The meetings began with Veli walking up to the podium and proclaiming into the microphone, "Alright kiddos, it's time to start our meeting." The group of men who occupied the back row of tables were always immersed in loud conversations and would ignore Veli's call to order. At every meeting, Veli would end up marching, with microphone in hand, from the podium to the back of the room to get their attention. This group of men, which included Veli's husband Petros, deliberately chose to sit apart from the rest of the seniors in an old fashioned display of Greek village life; where men and women did not sit together during social functions. They were in the minority though, for most of the seniors, both men and women were equally disbursed throughout the room.

Many of the seniors did not directly participate in such behavior back in Greece; most were too young when they immigrated to America or were born here in America. But they remember the stories told to them by their parents and grand-parents. As with partaking of Holy Communion during the liturgy brings Christians closer to Christ, the re-enactment of village life during the meetings enabled the seniors to experience what it would have felt like if they were

living back in Greece. Therefore the re-enactments of village life bring these seniors closer to their Greek heritage and the life their parents left behind when they immigrated to America.

The seniors knew what was about to happen and would shout, “You tell him Veli,” or “Oh boy, he’s going to get it,” while some of the men tried to warn him with a “Watch out, Petros here she comes.” Veli would wag her finger and speak into the microphone, “Petros, we are ready to start the meeting.” “Yes, Veli. We were just catching up,” Petros would explain apologetically, head bowed. “Yes, I know, but it is time to start the meeting now.”

Everyone in the room would laugh, because they had all seen and heard a version of this scene being played out many times before. On one occasion, Toula touched my arm and whispered, “Aren’t they a couple?” I smiled and replied, “Yes, they are.” All of the seniors would clap and yell out their approval as Veli and Petros always kissed and made up. Only then would the room quiet down so that the meeting could begin.

The Seniors Took Attendance

As Veli returned to the front of the room, she would look around for individuals who had not attended a meeting for some time. With microphone in hand she would announce, “Alright kiddos, I want to recognize some of the seniors who are here today that we haven’t seen for a while. I see … Wave, so that everyone can see you. We are so glad that you are all here today!”

On one occasion, Georgette, seated on Toula’s right, asked who Veli had just recognized. Aphro, seated directly opposite of Toula and me, leaned over to ask Toula the same question, but also wanted to know where that person was sitting. After Toula answered their questions, she turned to me to whisper that Agape had asked where the person was sitting because she has trouble with her vision. (Agape was blind in one eye and had poor vision in the other.)

> See what happens when you get old? [Toula said to me, while the other ladies seated around us laughed at the remark.] How old are you? [Toula asked me.]
>
> I'm forty six. [I told her.]
>
> Oh, you're just a baby. [She rolled her eyes at me and looked away while the others at our table continued to laugh.]

The seniors were very conscious of age, and as the youngest attendee, they loved to point out to me those seniors who, as Veli told me, "Are getting up there."

Conflicting Actions: A People Struggling Between "Obedience" And "Audacity"

Following the welcome to those who had missed meetings, Veli asked, "John, are we ready?" Everyone turned to see John position a video camera over by the large windows. He gave Veli a 'thumbs up' sign to indicate that he was ready, and Veli continued, "Okay kiddos, we are ready to start! Father Gabriel will you open our meeting with a word of prayer?" While the meetings were social in nature, they still needed to have an element of the spiritual present. The seniors, being obedient and respectful to Church authority, invited Father Gabriel to open every one of their meetings with prayer. As Father Gabriel walked to the front of the room, those seniors seated along his path reached out to kiss his hand or to cross themselves reverently. Veli handed him the microphone, kissed his hand, and then moved to sit at a table behind the podium with the other officers.

"Thank you, Veli. Let us bow our heads in prayer." Father Gabriel intoned. The atmosphere in the room became reverent as everyone bowed their heads and many closed their eyes. Father Gabriel mentioned in prayer all those who had recently passed and those who were ill. He prayed for the church leaders and for the President of the United States. I heard snickers from different parts of the room when the President's name was mentioned, followed by warning sh's to be quiet. Father Gabriel then finished with the "Lord's Prayer" and everyone joined in to

recite it out loud. The Lord's Prayer was first recited in English and then repeated in Ancient Greek as is the tradition in the Greek Orthodox Church.

I observed that no senior objected to the group reciting the Lord's Prayer in two languages (see Table 1). While most of the seniors recited the prayer in both languages, only a few did so in either of the two languages. Those that did not recite in both languages remained quiet while the rest of the group finished praying.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen	ΠΑΤΕΡ ΗΜΩΝ Ο ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΙΣ ΑΓΙΑΣΘΗΤΩ ΤΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ ΣΟΥ ΕΛΘΕΤΩ Η ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ ΣΟΥ ΓΕΝΗΘΗΤΩ ΤΟ ΘΕΛΗΜΑ ΣΟΥ, ΩΣ ΕΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΩ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙ ΤΗΣ ΓΗΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΡΤΟΝ ΗΜΩΝ ΤΟΝ ΕΠΙΟΥΣΙΟΝ ΔΟΣ ΗΜΙΝ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΦΕΣ ΗΜΙΝ ΤΑ ΟΦΕΙΛΗΜΑΤΑ ΗΜΩΝ, ΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΗΜΕΙΣ ΑΦΙΕΜΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΟΦΕΙΛΕΤΑΙΣ ΗΜΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΗ ΕΙΣΕΝΕΓΚΗΣ ΗΜΑΣ ΕΙΣ ΠΕΙΡΑΣΜΟΝ, ΑΛΛΑ ΡΥΣΑΙ ΗΜΑΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΝΗΡΟΥ. ΑΜΗΝ.

Table 1: The Lord's Prayer

Everyone finished the prayer by crossing themselves three times: once for the Father, once for the Son, and once for the Holy Ghost. This custom is only performed in the Orthodox Church.

As I observed Father Gabriel pray, I recalled the conversation we had when I approached him for the study. He had recommended that I contact the seniors club, and while describing the group, had mentioned that "these seniors are not very religious," because many of them did not attend worship services. What I was observing at the meetings though appeared to contradict his statements, for I saw the seniors: reverently kissing Father Gabriel's hand, performing the sign of the cross, participating in corporate prayer, and invoking the Virgin Mary or the Saints for

assistance when discussing the health of family members or friends. The following is a typical conversation regarding illness or injury between the seniors.

> Ti ipes? O Tony sou eine arostos? Panagia mou, prostate mas! Ti apathe? [What did you say? Your Tony is sick? My Virgin Mary, protect us! What happened?](Mara)

Father Gabriel And An "Audacious" Incident

Following the corporate prayer, Father Gabriel handed the microphone back to Veli and walked away from the podium; stopping to shake hands or say a brief word to those seniors who got his attention along the way. The seniors once again became engrossed in side conversations while Father Gabriel took a seat. Fasching and deChant (2001) say that we possess "tendencies that are at war in every person and in every community"; this became evident within the group (of seniors) as soon as Father Gabriel finished the corporal prayer. One moment the seniors were "obedient," respectful and reverent towards Father Gabriel and the next moment they were "audacious" and loud.

Veli restored order and continued, "We will start our meeting with the reading of the minutes from last month. Mary can you please read the minutes to us?" When Mary had finished, Veli asked Michael to read the treasurer's report. Following the report, Veli asked, "Well, who knows what we do next?"

Petros yelled from the back of the room, "Oh no. Spare us!" Laughter was heard throughout the room and Toula turned to say, "I can hardly wait to hear what Veli is going to read to us today! She likes to read jokes she gets from the internet."

> Sorry Father Gabriel, I know that some of the jokes are a little racy…

Veli said that statement while grinning. Everyone looked at Father Gabriel who appeared to be more than a little uncomfortable at having to hear the jokes. He shrugged his shoulders and gestured for Veli to continue. Veli proceeded to tell two jokes. I've included one of them.

> A woman went to her priest because she had a problem with her two female parrots. "What seems to be the problem, Diane?" The priest asked her. "Well you see I got these two female parrots, but they like to swear and act suggestively in their cage. Oh, Father! I can't get them to stop! I've tried everything but it's no use. What am I to do? I love the birds, but I can't have company over because I am embarrassed by their behavior." She cried. "Well that's easy!" The priest proclaimed. "Why don't you bring them and place them in the cage with my two male parrots. The only thing they do all day is bow their heads and pray." "Do you really think it will work?" She asks him. "Of course it will." The next day Diane brought her two female parrots and the priest put them in with his two male parrots. "Look!" One male parrot said to the other male parrot. "Our prayers have been answered!" (Veli, July 12, 2005)

Everyone laughed and one or two seniors could be heard explaining the jokes to those that did not get the punch line. Some seniors looked at Father Gabriel to gauge his reaction. He smiled at them, but the smile did not reach his eyes, and he did not participate in any of the conversations going on around him. He turned in my direction and raised his eyebrows as if saying, "I told you so, didn't I?"

Veli made no attempt to stop the laughter for a minute or two. She took the time to visit with the seniors sitting near the front of the room. She then crossed the room to talk with John about the location of the video camera. After John moved the equipment to a more satisfactory location, Veli returned to the podium. With her joke sheet in hand, she lifted the microphone and asked, "Are we ready for another one?"

"Veli, VELI!" Father Gabriel yelled. "One moment, kiddos. Father Gabriel is talking. Go ahead Father Gabriel." Veli said into her microphone. "I have an appointment I must keep." He then stood and waved goodbye to all the seniors. As he walked by my chair, he bent down,

placed his hand on my shoulder and whispered, “Good luck, Michael,” and walked away before I could respond. “I told you he is a nice man!” Toula told me as we both watched him leave. “Yes, Toula. He is a nice man.” I responded. At the door, Father Gabriel turned and said, “Thank you all; see you all in church Sunday!” With that he smiled and departed.

“Thank you, Father Gabriel. Wasn’t it nice for him to open our meeting with prayer?” Veli said into her microphone.

> It’s nice of Father Gabriel to be here, but now that he’s gone we can talk about going to the casino. (Toula)

The seniors seated around our table agreed; some verbally, others by nodding their heads. We heard Veli say into her microphone, “Okay kiddos, how about one more?” “No, spare us!” Petros countered from the back row. Everyone laughed at Petros’s outburst, and yelled for Veli to continue. Father Gabriel was long gone when Veli read more of her jokes.

After a few more jokes, the seniors got down to business. Toula raised her hand and asked Veli to give the group “details about going to the casino” that month. Veli proceeded to collect the names of those individuals who planned to go. She told the seniors, “Okay kiddos, mark your calendars. I’ve arranged for a charter bus to pick us up next Thursday morning, right here. Don’t be late.” “What time Veli?” Petros yelled from the back table. “Thank you, Petros. The bus will leave promptly at 10 a.m. Don’t be late.”

The telling of the jokes was a transitional period in the meetings from the religious to the secular. The seniors, as “obedient” Greek Orthodox faithful, wanted Father Gabriel to be present during the meetings to affirm their connection to the church and to affirm the “sacred” order of how things are. But the seniors also wanted to have fun. They needed Father Gabriel to leave so they acted in an “audacious” manner that put into question the power his position had over them in a secular environment. The seniors and not Father Gabriel dictated how the meetings would

run. Order and "obedience" during prayer gave way to "audacity" and usurping of his authority. They implicitly and overtly laid claim to the building known as St. Mary's as theirs to use as they saw fit.

Lunch: A Celebration Of Blended Traditions

Figure 12: Lunch with the seniors

The seniors had lunch following the business portion of their meetings. Veli liked to inform the group who was providing lunch and for what occasion. Families of the seniors contributed by bringing in food for the whole group to celebrate special events like anniversaries and birthdays. Martha told me she contacted Veli to arrange a lunch to celebrate her parents' 50th wedding anniversary.

> I called Veli, oh about one or two months ago, to see if I could cater lunch. I wanted to do lunch for my parents, so it would be special. All their friends will be there, most attend meetings anyway. They will be celebrating their 50th wedding celebration in June.

John also wanted to cater lunch to celebrate the memory of his deceased father.

> Mamma now, even after 14 years, misses him terribly...The date of his death was looming so I want her friends to celebrate his life and support her in her grief. These meetings are a god send. Many families take the opportunity to remember their loved ones.

John added that he had personal reasons too.

> I love my mamma, she's a very special woman. You know, my father was always busy with the business. I hardly saw him, but I knew he loved me because I remember him coming into my room and patting my head. He thought I was asleep, I fooled him. I would lay quiet as a mouse waiting for him to come home. I remember he would smell, you know like fish oil from the restaurant, I didn't

> mind. He would lean over, kiss me on my cheek. [He rubbed his hand over his left cheek]. I could hear mamma in the background shushing him not to wake me. He would say, "How was my Tony today?" and my mamma would say, "Tony's a good boy. He went to the bank, or he went to the market for me today." He would say, "Does he ask of me?" and me being me, you know I would play with my friends, run errands when asked and you know what? I got in my share of trouble. But the only time I thought of papa was when mamma yelled at me for getting into trouble. She would say, "Wait till your pappa gets home!" Then, oh yeah, I thought about pappa, mamma yelled, but not papa, oohh [he grinned and rubbed his behind] only then did I think about him. But it's funny, I would wait in bed and my mamma, no matter what I did that day she would say, "Your Tony's a good boy" or "Oh yes, he talks of you all the time. I tell him how hard you work in the business. He tells me "I love my pappa," or "I'm proud of my pappa!" I miss him too, but when he died, my mamma changed. She always protected me. Now it is my turn to take care for her. I called Veli to tell her to leave this date for me. I will celebrate my pappa with food I know my mamma likes.

Relatives visiting from out of state could also come to the meetings to recognize the seniors. Agape's relatives, for example, came from as far away as Alabama and Virginia to help celebrate her 80th birthday. Veli recognized Agape's birthday from the podium.

> Well kiddos, today I have a special surprise. We are going to celebrate a special birthday. Where is Agape?

Many of the seniors looked to where Agape was sitting. The seniors seated around Agape pointed to her and one yelled out, "Here she is, Veli, where she always sits." Another senior said, "Shh, don't spoil Agape's surprise."

> You're right, there is Agape." [Veli continued in her microphone.] Did you know that on Wednesday, Agape will be 80 years young?

The seniors started clapping and those around Agape told her, "congratulations," or "happy birthday." Then Veli said, "Alright, we have some people who've come a long way to sing "Happy Birthday" to Agape." At that moment, a group of people came into the room from the

kitchen. Agape had difficulty seeing them and yelled out, “Who’s here?” Veli gave the microphone to one of the adult women and stepped back. The woman said into the microphone,

> Happy Birthday mom! We are here to help you celebrate your birthday with all your friends. We want to thank Veli for making it possible. Mom, Paul and Nitsa and Haroula and all the kids are here. We want to say [and on cue the family started singing] Happy Birthday. (Agape’s daughter)

Figure 13: Happy Birthday to you!

At every monthly meeting, the seniors also recognized individuals celebrating “Name Days,” along with Birthdays. (Orthodox Christians almost always name their children after a Saint. An individual celebrates his name day on the date that Saint is commemorated.) In this “sacred” community, the Christian names “tied” members of the Greek community to the Orthodox faith. The celebration of Name Days along with birthdays illustrated how these people blended their Greek traditions with American values. The following account illustrated this point.

“Okay, what about Name Days?” Veli asked? Someone yelled out, “Maria’s celebrating her Name Day this month!” “Okay, kiddos. Let’s sing!” Veli said and everyone started singing, “Happy Birthday and Name Day to you, Happy Birthday and Name Day to you…” to the tune of “Happy Birthday.” (There is no equivalent Greek tune.)

Figure 14: Reminiscing over lunch

The song ended with clapping and cheering. Veli said, "We have so much to be thankful for! So many blessings! Okay everyone it's time to come get your lunch. Remember, those celebrating go to the front of the line. And don't forget to check under your plates to see if you are a winner!"

The type of food catered varied from month to month. One month it could be Greek; the seniors' favorites were either pastitso (Greek lasagna) or chicken marinated with Mediterranean spices and lemon juice, and a village salad. While the next month, they would eat cold-cut sandwiches with potato chips or baked beans; truly an American cuisine! The seniors enjoyed both varieties. Lastly, they always had celebration cake for dessert.

The Creation Of Symbols: A Life Story Speech

In Chapter Three I described several symbols that connected the Orthodox faithful to St. Mary's: the church dome, iconography, the stone altar, and the water fountain. During the monthly meetings, the seniors created their own secular totems; videotapes of member giving life story presentations in front of the group. These tapes were stored in the church library.

The seniors would eat a quick lunch while catching up with their friends. Veli used the lunch time to prepare for the next portion of the meeting; a senior would go to the podium to give a life story speech. The seniors looked forward to hearing one of their own give their life story speech and appeared to lean toward the speaker in anticipation of what she was going to say.

> Look Agape is going to speak today and she brought pictures. I hope she'll let us see them. (Maria)

Of course she will. Why do you think she brought them? (Toula)

The room got very quiet as everyone waited for Agape to begin... *(Discussion of the life story presentations is found in Chapter 5.)*

The Seniors Played Bingo

Agape returned to her seat following her presentation and the seniors prepared to bring the afternoon to a close with Bingo. (Bingo is not played in Greece, but it is a Greek favorite in America.) Veli was the caller and announced the numbers in both English and Greek. As the seniors started to play, I noted that Agape had difficulty placing chips on her Bingo card. In order to see her card, she had to place her face within centimeters of it and scan each column, number by number. She had some success in finding the numbers on her card, but quickly fell behind.

Andrea, who was sitting to Agapes' left, said to her "Did you get that last number, Agape? It's hard to hear Veli sometimes." Agape laughed and said, "No, I can hear alright. I can't see's the problem." Andrea leaned over and quickly scanned her card and covered two numbers that had already been called out. "There," Andrea told Agape.

Agape knew I was seated directly opposite her. She said, "Thank you, Andrea," and then, "You know, Michael, I can't see my card. Hah, I can't see my card now, but you know? I sure was a looker. Did you know that?" "No, I didn't," I quietly replied so that the seniors around me could still hear Veli calling out numbers. "She was Miss …[winner of a beauty pageant]," Andrea whispered from beside her. "Yes, I was a looker back then all right." Toula added, "You know, her daughter, Maria, was Mrs. …[also the winner of a beauty pageant]!" "Yes, she was!" Andrea confirmed. Agape's face broke out into a beautiful smile. I smiled back, but wondered if she could see it. Everyone around our table laughed out loud when Toula yelled out.

It sucks getting old!

You ain't kidding! [Nick's reply left everyone laughing and shaking their heads.]

Veli called out more numbers. Andrea scanned Agape's card and said excitedly, "Agape, you've got Bingo!" "I do?" Agape said. She was surprised, but quickly recovered and said, "Oh, I do!" and then in a loud voice she yelled out, "BINGO!" "How wonderful, did everyone hear that? Agape has Bingo!" Veli said in her microphone. "Okay, everyone hold onto your cards until we confirm Agape's Bingo. Okay, kiddo, call out your numbers," Veli instructed her. We watched Andrea help Agape pick up her card so that she could see to recite her winning numbers. Everyone in the room waited patiently for Agape to finish. When she was done, Veli proclaimed, "That is a good Bingo! Everyone clear your cards. Agape, go get a prize!"

"Shake the numbers, Veli!" her husband, Petros, yelled out. "Yeah, shake the numbers! You keep calling the same numbers!" other seniors yelled out for all to hear. "My, my, okay kiddos, what a lively bunch!" Veli said into her microphone, followed with loud laughter coming from all the tables.

The seniors took their Bingo seriously! They were playful, but very competitive. Toula tried to get me to give up my prizes if I won. She would lean next to me and say, "Remember if you win, get me paper towels." On one occasion, she got disgusted with her cards and said, "Michael, I want two new cards, these aren't lucky; hand me new cards." I looked at the stack on the table, picked the top two cards and handed them to her. She hated that. "What, are you kidding? You can't give me the first two! Let me have the cards. I'll pick them myself!" Agape and Andrea started laughing.

The Bingo prizes were located on a table in the back corner of the room. When Agape won she said, "Michael, go pick something nice for me." I said, "Agape, what would you like? I see liquid soap, tissues, napkins, paper towels…" "Get her the paper towels," Toula interrupted

without looking up. “Toula, se parakalo (I told her ‘please’ in Greek)!” “Paper towels,” she pressed, and waved her hand at me to get moving. “Would you like paper towels, Agape?” “Paper towels would be nice, thank you.” “Ha, paper towels, I told you!” Toula finished. “Okay. Paper towels it is! I’ll be right back.” “You’re such a nice Greek boy,” Toula told my departing back. She called out, “Are you married?” “Yes, Toula. I’m happily married and I’ll be right back.” I mentioned the last part because the seniors loved to tease each other, and since I was there, I too became fair game.

These seniors possessed a zest for life that was highly contagious. Yes, they’d complain about aches and pains, health concerns associated with aging, or the loss of loved ones, but they also knew how to have fun and were a very lively bunch. When Maria won a game, her husband yelled out “Bravo!”, grabbed her hand and stood her up. They ended up in each other’s arms dancing around their table. “Oh my, careful you two,” Veli called as John brought Maria close and then swooped her low. While the couple danced, other seniors laughed and clapped at the display.

Seniors Created A “Counterculture” To The “Sacred”

The seniors felt comfortable addressing any issues during the meetings. Father Gabriel, for example, was invited to give his life’s story speech to the seniors; even though he himself is not yet a senior. The invitation was sent in an effort to create a more positive working environment between the seniors and the priests because the seniors were still vexed at the changes Father Gabriel enacted in the church service. After that particular meeting Veli commented on how open he was with what he shared.

> I asked Father Gabriel to talk to the seniors because I felt we need to know him and he needs to know us if we are going to work together. Many of the seniors are uncomfortable around him.

I asked her why they felt that way.

> You see, many of the seniors are very old fashioned. We have our way, the way we do things, don't like change.

When she stopped, I said, "He does?" and waited for her to continue.

> In a way…[she cocked her head sideways while thinking] he has ideas about the service being more in English and less Greek, this is good for non-Greek families, we have many now you see. We have a beautiful choir but people [meaning some of the seniors] want a more traditional service, more chanting and having the choir sing more in Greek. The Gospel reading is in English, rarely in Greek. The sermon is in English too. Many of the seniors don't understand, get frustrated. They come to church, but don't feel…I don't know." [She shrugged her shoulders and exhaled] "Welcomed?" I said. [She nodded her head] After a few seconds she continued, "It's our church. These people [meaning these seniors], their parents built this church. It is their church. They should have a say, should be able to talk to Father Gabriel about it. After Father Gabriel's speech, I feel that more seniors will talk to him now… This church, belongs to all of us. We'll keep working at it.

I asked her, "Why do you feel the seniors will be able to talk to him now?

> Well, he can be stuffy, very curt. But not today. Today he was one of us. He shared personal stuff. People can relate to his story. Growing up in a Greek family and what that was like, not feeling close to the church, and now he is a priest! He talked about people we know and didn't know he knew, very surprising. I saw how the seniors took to him. He'll be more approachable now.

Veli described the seniors as "being very old-fashioned." In other words, they wanted the church service to stay as it had always been. But more than just the language changed for these seniors for their church had always been run by Greeks, for Greeks.

Fasching and deChant (2001) say that a "sacred" society is ethnocentric. The changes in the liturgy now allowed people of other nationalities into the church. St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church was no longer a Greek church; to them it became just St. Mary's Orthodox Church. The seniors were the descendents of Greek immigrants who built St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church. The church was an integral part of who they were.

In the literature review, Kunkleman (1990) stated that "Greek Orthodoxy is an inextricable part of Greek ethnicity. The church is vitally important in the lives of the Greeks and plays an undeniable role." The seniors were afraid that they would not only lose their church, but also a part of who they are; their Greek identity. Father Gabriel, while Greek himself, created an anti-ethnocentric culture that opposed the status quo. Fasching and deChant (2001) call this a "counter-culture" to the "sacred;" where inclusion of the stranger into the Orthodox community is a "holy" act that transforms a "sacred" society by removing any restrictions to membership- not a Greek descendent? Not a problem.

The meeting brought everyone-seniors and priest together. As Veli said, "Today he was one of us." Damaris, one of the seniors involved in asking Father Gabriel to speak in front of the seniors, told me that she too was interested in hearing what Father Gabriel had to say.

> I've approached Father Gabriel on many occasions. You see, not everyone feels they can tell Father Gabriel what they think. He bristles at being questioned. When he makes up his mind …[she stops that line of thought then continues] anyway they ask me and if I think it's appropriate I go to him. I have no problem talking to him. If something is bothering me I will look him in the eye and tell him what I think. He listens to me. I can make him understand. His speech was good. Did you like it? [She doesn't wait for me to respond] Anyway, I knew a lot of what he said already but I'm glad others got to hear it.

I asked her, "Why is it important for others to hear it?"

> Like I said, he can be stand-offish. It's silly really. He's our priest, why can't they go to him, anyway, if they won't go to him, then he needs to go to us! He needs to know.

I asked her, "What is it that they feel they can't share with him directly?"

> Michael, I can't tell you that. They come to me in private; I won't share that with you.

I asked her, “I understand why you feel that way. I know about confidentiality. I won’t use their names. I just want to know about the nature of the questions or concerns they feel they can’t address with Father Gabriel.”

> Well, he can improve his bed side manner and he needs to listen. We have concerns, [I interrupted her with “do you mean the seniors?”] yes the seniors have concerns with how we are treated. We want to be a part of, you know, deciding what happens with the church. That is why I was asked by several of the seniors and ran for a position on the church board, so we can have a voice. Listen, we understand that the service can’t be entirely in Greek because of all of the non-Greek members, but he has to listen, to understand why we feel that way, to show he can compromise and treat us with respect. We won’t be quiet. You know, many of us [meaning the seniors] or our children hold many offices. We’ll get the message out.

I said, “So you are trying to make changes...”

> No not changes, we want to keep things as is. And if that’s not possible then talk to us, tell us why, don’t just change things, we understand, we’re not blind, we see that we are not the same old congregation, but don’t ignore us. That’s not okay.

Accepting the invitation to speak to the seniors was a positive first step toward improving the relationship between Father Gabriel and the seniors. This could only have been accomplished in a place where both parties felt safe. Damaris later told me that the seniors felt comfortable enough after hearing Father Gabriel’s life story presentation to approach him with their concerns regarding changes in the Orthodox liturgy.

The seniors ministered to, and cared for each other as they dealt with failing health associated with old age.

> They [the seniors] are under my care. I encourage them to come. I call their home or apartments. I pester them in church, when I see them. I want them to get out, I make them look at me and tell me, “Veli, I will be there!” Then I know they will come. That’s right. [She nods her head triumphantly] If they tell me they will come, I know they will. I want them to remember the meetings, what we did, how much fun they had. See faces maybe not seen in a while. To play bingo and win a

> prize. To celebrate- especially if it's their birthday. So I watch, I get a coffee, or help them to the bathroom, I just try to be helpful. (Veli, conversation, April 12, 2005)

Veli was always extremely busy. On one occasion I told her, "Veli, I've watched how you catered to them today. You didn't sit still, you were on the go, maybe sat down a little when Georgia gave her speech, but even then only for a little." She responded magnanimously.

> Michael, these seniors are special. I want to, it's what I've been taught, what I believe.

Toula had overheard my conversation with Veli and felt obligated to talk to me about it as we walked out to the parking lot.

> Veli is a saint. She makes it her business. If someone is missing, she'll figure out why, she'll ask me, Maria, or someone to call. See if they need anything. That's Veli, she doesn't rest. We love her, yes we do. Make sure you write that.

Toula was not the only one who wanted me to know how much Veli means to them.

> Veli, called me every day. EVERY DAY [She raised her voice.]. Brought me avgolemenosoupa [Home-made egg-lemon soup]. Her smile at me. I know it'll be okay, she said so! (Mara)

While Veli may have been the most recognized for ministering to others, she was certainly not alone; all of the seniors demonstrated concern and care for each other. I listened to many conversations between the seniors that concerned their health. The following conversation occurred between Toula and Mara.

> Toula: Hi hon, are you feeling better?
> Mara: Yeah, but I'm still tired. [She shook her head.]
> Toula: You've gotta rest, take it easy. Drink lots of fluids. It took me three weeks to get over that nasty cold.
> Mara: I know, I hate being sick.
> Toula: Ha, who does! Hang in there. Are you gonna go to the Christmas Concert?
> Mara: I'll be here, Veli is picking me up.
> Toula: That's the spirit. [Toula patted Mara's arm.]

The following conversation between George and John, as they were talking by the bay windows overlooking the lake, also illustrated this point.

> George: Father Gabriel is going to speak today
> John: Yea, I know. I heard Father Gabriel talking to Nick about it. What's he going to say?
> George: No clue, hope it's good.
> John: Should be, they've all been good.
> George: Yeah
> John: Where's he from?
> George: East coast?
> John: Have you heard Despina is in the hospital again?
> George: Yeah, she's getting worse.
> John: Aren't we all?
> George: So what else is new! [They snort]
> John: Look, Paul just arrived. Let's go ask him how she's doing. [They moved away from the window and met up with Paul as he reached his seat. All three sat down at the same table.]

The meetings also gave the seniors a safe place to cope with the passing of one their own. The following exchange exemplified how these seniors handled the most important concern that they could face in their old age- death. They were empowered by holding their meetings on "sacred" ground; in their church under a beautiful golden dome, with friends and family and their priests reciting prayers. They could look out over the large lake that the property sat on; the water itself lending that spiritual quality exemplified by the water fountain in the church courtyard. And being surrounded by countless symbols that "tied them" to their ancestral history; both religious and secular, and having given their life story speech that was videotaped for future generations to watch, they were prepared to make one final journey; to celebrate a final immigration into the afterlife. The following exchange between the seniors and a junior priest of the church illustrated this point.

Father Leo was filling in for Father Gabriel who was out on an emergency visit. Veli addressed the seniors with her microphone, "Oh how wonderful! Look who is here today. It's Father Leo, everyone!"

Everyone watched as Father Leo walked to the front of the room to speak quietly with Veli. After a brief discussion, Veli nodded and gave Father Leo the microphone. He said, "Thank you, Veli," and then turned to address the seniors.

> Hi, all. Father Gabriel asked me to come say prayer today. He had to step out and couldn't make it. He wanted me to tell you that he's sorry he can't be here, but had to go do a hospital visitation.

George yelled out from the back of the room, "What's wrong Father? Who did he go see?"

> As you all know, Despina has been very sick. The family believes it is almost time. So they asked Father Gabriel to be with them today.

Many of the seniors were aware that Despina had been in the hospital for quite a while. Toula turned to me and asked me if I knew Despina. I told Toula that I didn't know her.

> What a wonderful person. Everyone loves her. She has done so much for this church. She started the Philoptochos Society. Always thinking how she could help everyone else and you know what? Always doing it with a giving spirit. Boy we are going to miss her.

The seniors who were sitting at our table were listening to Toula. They took turns looking at me and nodding in agreement.

> Michael she is a saint. Toula is right. Do you remember how she helped you when you first arrived?" [She addressed Toula and another lady, Nitsa. They both nodded that they did and Toula told the seniors at my table.] "Oh boy. When my Jim died, I was in shock. I miss him so, anyway I wanted nothing, nobody. But dear Despina would hear nothing of it. What a stubborn…[Toula shook her head from side to side.] She was with me all the time, couldn't get rid of her. [She laughed and wiped away a tear] She was the best; don't know what I'd have done without her.

The conversation around the table stopped when Veli spoke into her microphone.

> Dear me, thank you Father Leo. We all know Despina is getting ready to go be with the Lord. Don't we kiddos? [She smiled out at the crowd and they returned her smile. I saw many seniors wiping at tears around their eyes.] What a beautiful life Despina has lived! Isn't that right?

I heard several side conversations start up around the room, and from time to time, I heard a senior laugh out loud. Father Leo stayed silent until a senior waved him close and they, along with others at their tables, bowed their heads in prayer. Veli also moved around the room, occasionally repeating what was said among the small groups into the microphone for everyone to hear. Within 15 minutes, everyone heard how Despina started the Philoptochos Society, and how she had helped many of the seniors in the group when they had a need. Veli said in her microphone,

> That's right, kiddos! Let's celebrate Despina's life. We are so proud of her, aren't we? We know we are getting up there. Don't we, kiddos? That's right. It's okay though isn't it? Father Leo will you lead us in prayer?

Father Leo smiled at Veli and quickly went to take the microphone.

> Thank you, Veli. Yes, did you know that I too have experienced Despina's generosity?" [It was a rhetorical question. He didn't wait for any senior to respond, but quickly continued.] "When we moved to Minnesota, Despina was like mamma. [I heard and saw some seniors laughing at the remark.] You know, mamma knows best. Well, Despina was always ready when one of our children got sick. She would come right over and both my wife and I felt so blessed to have her there in our home. She never worried, she just did. You just knew that anything she did would turn out right. [More seniors yelled out that this was true] You know that as a priest I get to minister to you, but I know that Despina too has ministered to many of us. As I look out at you, I know you know what I'm talking about.

Toula yelled out, "We know Father. She's a saint." Father Leo continued after nodding toward Toula.

> We've been blessed because we have known Despina. [I saw seniors smiling at each other and gently touching each other on the arm or hugging.]

After a minute or two, Father Leo continued talking in the microphone.

> Lord we want to thank you for being with us. Today is not a day of sorrow, but a day to rejoice. Please be with Despina and her family. We pray that they are rejoicing in her life as we are today for we know that we will all be reunited in Jesus' glory. We now loudly pray, Our Father…." [All the seniors joined in. At the end of the Lord's Prayer, Father Leo says] "Thank you all."

Father Leo handed Veli the microphone.

> Thank you Father Leo. Wow kiddos, I don't know what to say. I'm speechless.

Petros yelled out, "Now that's shocking!" Everyone laughed, including Father Leo. Veli pointed and shook her finger at Petros.

> Petros… [And then after a slight pause] I want to thank you all for sharing. I don't know about you but I feel so good to have friends here. To remember. I'm so proud of you! [Father Leo waved to get Veli's attention and signaled he had to go.] Kiddos, Father Leo has to leave.

Without the microphone, Father Leo yelled out his good byes.

> Call me if you want to talk, I'll be in the office all day, or have Veli reach me after hours. She knows how to get a hold of me. [Some of the seniors kissed Father Leo's hand as he left, as is the Greek custom.]

The seniors had met in this building throughout their lives for many reasons: to attend church services on Sundays and Greek school (for themselves and later for their families) through the week; to celebrate important secular events like Independence Day (both Greek and American); to participate in social organizations such as AHEPA and the American Legion. Now, in their golden years, the church building offered them a place, to not only celebrate life's joys, but to also confront critical issues such as failing health or the loss of loved ones.

Humor Lightened The Mood

The seniors did their best to keep a positive attitude by infusing humor into every meeting. As Veli told me, she liked telling jokes because they make the seniors feel better and got their minds off of problems associated with getting older,

> I like looking on the internet [For jokes.], it gives me something to do. Laughter makes everyone feel better, it keeps us young at heart. That's it, why I guess I do it. I tell jokes, I act silly, I don't care, they are my kiddos. Who wants to think on who's gonna go next? (Veli, interview, July 5, 2006)

I found the seniors zest for life to be very contagious- whether they were in fervent prayer, celebrating the loss of a beloved friend, enjoying fellowship over lunch, competing against each other at Bingo, or planning to visit the casino or attend a Christmas concert. I will always remember John's statement, "who has time to think of death when there is so much living left to do!" Yes, indeed. Veli's 'kiddos' had a lot of living left to do.

Chapter Five
Life Stories

In Chapter Three, Fasching's and deChant's (2001) term the "sacred" was used to describe why the seniors behaved as they did when presented with changes in their Greek Orthodox Church service. But because religion, morality, and society are different faces of a single reality- a society's way of life expressed in sacred customs, the term religion can also be used to describe whatever people hold sacred; their way of life expressed in sacred customs. For the seniors, who were either the original Greek immigrants or the children of immigrants, that meant preserving their Greek identity not only through membership in the Greek Orthodox Church, but also by holding onto their traditions and customs- those ethnic values, brought over from Greece.

Examples of how the seniors had used the building known as St. Mary's throughout different stages of their lives, to maintain their Greek identity or more importantly their way of life, were given.

Chapter Four continued on that theme, that the seniors of St. Mary's were currently using their church for secular reasons-to also hold their seniors club meetings. It was noted that while the seniors strongly resisted the changes to their church service, they were very willing to blend both Greek and American traditions during the meetings.

Both Chapters Three and Four included many examples of religious and secular symbols that connected the seniors to their church and to the traditions they upheld that spoke to their way of life. The symbols were either physical, ritualistic, or a combination of both. In Chapter Three, the religious symbols described were the dome, iconography, the stone altar, and the water fountain. Receiving Holy Communion was a powerful symbol because it was ritualistic and

physical. In Chapter Four, the secular symbols described were also either physical, ritualistic in nature or a combination of both. The ritualistic included the re-enactment of village life in Greece, and the blending of Greek and American celebrations recognizing Name days and Birthdays through the singing of "Happy Birthday," playing Bingo (not Greek at all) and eating both Greek and American cuisine. The most important secular symbol was both physical and ritualistic in nature. It was briefly mentioned in the last chapter, but will be fully described here- that the seniors undergo a "sacred" ritual of videotaping each other giving life story speeches to the assembled group and that they then store the videotapes in the church library.

What is found on the videotapes? Everything that these seniors hold "sacred"- an account of how they lived their lives, from experience after experience, and from childhood to adulthood within the Greek community that helped defined this group of people.

Chapter Five includes the following sections: why the seniors chose to videotape themselves in the first place; a description of what was shared during the life stories, not only by the speaker but also by the other seniors around their tables; the seniors tracing their origins back to the villages of Greece; the seniors validating their place in the Greek community; the seniors describing what it was like to grow up in a Greek home (and community); seniors describing the marriages along with what happened when Greeks married non-Greeks; the seniors sharing stories describing their experiences in America; the seniors reflecting on their identity and on the choices they had made.

The Creation Of Symbols: The Videotaping Of Life Story Speeches

Each month, one of the seniors would stand at the podium and share their memorable life experiences. The speeches typically lasted 15 to 20 minutes and covered topics such as: growing up in a Greek family or in the Greek community, dating and marriage. The seniors viewed the

speeches as a highlight of the monthly meetings and everyone enjoyed participating in the discussions that followed.

> You know, I enjoy listening to the speeches. As you get older, you don't remember as much what it was like, sure you remember some things, but to hear someone talk, that is special. I say to myself, "the speeches, that is why you are going today!" So I come, I listen, we talk a little, and I remember what it was like. (Pavlos)

> I have wonderful memories of my childhood and I love sharing them! People come up to me and say, "Agape, that is so wonderful what you said." I am proud to be Greek and talk about my heritage. (Agape)

The Seniors Of St. Mary's Create Their Own "Sacred" Tradition

I asked Veli how the idea to invite the seniors to share some of their life experiences originated.

> Damaris decided to audiotape many of our seniors on behalf of the Penelope Organization, oh about a year ago. I thought that was a great idea. I thought, "Why can't we do that for our group?" You know, to speak in front of the group and share something about ourselves.

She said that she approached Sam, who was handy with technology, to videotape the presenters. When I asked her to explain more about the video taping of the presentations, she responded.

> You know, we enjoy hearing the stories. It's amazing what we learn, so much about people that we didn't know before! … And, we felt that, wow, wouldn't it be nice to have a record for all to see ten years, twenty years down the road? What a wonderful collection we have! We keep the tapes in the church library…We too can have something for our children, to remember us by.

> …and a lot of it [experiences shared in the presentations] is similar, we think. And then all of a sudden – like we have one, Helen, who was in the WACs. [Helen was in the Women's Army Corps during the WWII period] How many Greek women do you know that was in the WACs? Her whole life was very different. She moved out east – to the East Coast. Oh my gosh. She was with a mother who was raised differently – it's different out on the East Coast, they're more Greekified than we are. It really is amazing that we can speak Greek and yet we all have a different – we were brought up differently.

I observed 12 presentations over the course of the study. The seniors were eager to participate; a different senior spoke in front of the group every month. I also had access to 18 previously recorded presentations that were stored in the church library. The tapes often included comments on how much the group did not know about the speaker, along with a general satisfaction that they would be remembered through the tapes.

For instance, Veli was at the podium addressing the seniors after Angela finished her presentation; this is one of the very first presentations given by a senior. "Isn't this marvelous? We didn't know this about our friend, Angela. Did we?" The camera was focused on Veli so I couldn't see the seniors respond, but I could hear responses like, "No, I didn't," and "I didn't know that about her!" After Angela gave her speech, Veli stepped up to the podium, grasped Angela by the hand and said,

> My, how wonderful! This is why I have asked you [she points out to the seniors in the audience] to speak to us. There is so much we don't know about our group. I am so glad that we can share. You know, we are getting up there. We are not young anymore. We will be able to remember and have a record to show our friends to see when we are no longer here.

The idea of having the tapes as something to remember them by was reiterated in a very funny way during a table discussion. I was serving coffee to a table of seniors when Ted called out, "Here, sit here." He pointed to an empty chair at his table. "You can sit with us today," he said as I took the offered seat. Michael had just finished giving his life story speech and everyone at the table was ready to discuss what they had heard. After a few moments went by, Tom said,

> I gave my pethia [children] a copy [video of his speech]. So when I'm gone they can look at it together with all the family and remember this old man. [He pointed to himself while proudly sticking out his chest.]

Some of the seniors looked down at their hands, while others just shook their heads. They understood that Tom wanted his family to have the videotape to view after his death. I saw Ted look around the table at all the melancholy faces and then he shouted out.

> No spare them. You're too ugly!

Everyone was taken by surprise. There was a moment of silence, but then everyone at the table started laughing hysterically. Ted's remark really lightened the mood. As the laughter died down, Nitsa said,

> Thank you, Ted. I needed that! My side still hurts I laughed so hard. I'm proud we're making these tapes. It helps me, you know, to get up to do this. To see others do the same. I'm proud of our people and everything we accomplished.
>
> Bah, stop talking in the past tense. You make it sound like we're dead already. We're not. [Ted interrupted.]
>
> [Nitsa continued.] You're right, we're not, but sometimes I feel like one foot's in the grave. Don't get me wrong, I'm gonna go fighting!
>
> That's the spirit. [Ted told her.]
>
> You better believe it. I'm one tough broad. But it really helps, to… talk about it. [She finished and smiled warmly around the room.]
>
> Don't get old Michael. [Ted said looking at me while the other seniors chuckled quietly. I remained quiet; not knowing what to say to that.]
>
> When I finished my speech… and everyone clapped… and then… when I walked back to my seat to all those smiling faces. The hugs… and kisses I got, I felt… it's hard to explain, but I felt… I don't know, like everything will be okay. [Tia said with a very peaceful look on her face.]
>
> Everything will be okay. [Ted confirmed. He looked at all the seniors around the table and they were emboldened by his smiling face.] (Group conversation, July 5, 2005)

I felt very privileged to have been included in this particular discussion and was honored when Ted asked, “You’ll write about us?” All eyes turned to me, expectant looks on each senior’s face. “Yes, Ted. I’ll write about you. Thank you.” I whispered.

“Good, who’s ready to play Bingo? I’ve got my eye on that cooking thermometer!” Tom yelled out. Veli heard him from across the large room. “Oh oh, it sounds like Tom’s table is getting rowdy. It’s time. Everyone get your cards ready!”

The Life Story Speech: A Ritual Of Validation Of Membership In A “Sacred” Community

Earlier I quoted Fasching and deChant (2001) as stating that a society’s way of life is expressed in “sacred” customs, which provide members of a society meaning and dictate how members are to act within the society. The speeches served this purpose for the seniors- to validate their membership within the Greek community, because the stories proclaimed to all that they had acted appropriately and therefore met the qualifications of membership established by the community.

While the speeches were not rehearsed and the seniors could speak on any topic of their choosing, most ended up talking about: growing up in a Greek family or in the Greek community, having to go to Greek school while young, dating and marriage, what part of Greece they or their parents immigrated from, how they are related to other Greeks in the community, how they raised their own children and deciding to what extent to maintain their Greek heritage into adulthood. The following sections describe in greater detail what was covered in the speeches.

The Seniors Traced Their Origins Back To Greece

The seniors would often begin their presentation by mentioning if they or their parents were born in Greece. Regardless of their birth place, the seniors always mention their home

village by name and location. For instance, Tia spoke about her arranged marriage and her future husband and his best friend in her speech.

> Michael and Nick were very close friends from childhood. They were from the same village- Niata. Everyone is from Niata.

Stating one's Greek origins was usually followed by a comment from someone in the room. Veli, who was sitting in her usual spot at the front table stood and said into the microphone, "That's okay, Tia you are telling the truth." Every senior felt the need to let the other seniors in attendance know from what part of Greece they, or their parents, had immigrated from. As Despina said, "… a lot of people came from the small towns in Greece. It's nice to know from where".

> I was born June 12, 1916 outside the suburb of Medrolopis [mainland of Greece]. I was a first-born and I was four years old and my brother wasn't even born when my father left Greece to come to America. Fourteen years later – it was a sunny day like it is today, May. A car came to our town, little town, and asked for Peter, Belos, and Gina. And I jumped up and said, "I am Peter and this is my brother Belos and my mother is at the house" – we were outside playing. And he said, "you better go tell your mother and get ready – you're going to America". We were stunned. Going to America – we jumped with joy and everything else. (Peter)

> My parents were from the beautiful island of Kios. My father came to the United States in early 1900, following his brother who had come a few years before. (Veli)

> Well, here goes nothing. I was born on August 9, 1927 in Warren Ohio. I was the youngest of four children born to Liza who came from Kios, Greece. (Toula)

Michael's statement of his origins sent the seniors into immediate applause.

> My parents were from a small village in Greece in Peliponossos, a little town outside of Sparta about an hour called Niata. Everybody has heard about Niata. My mother used to say, "Ta orea, Niata!" [translates to, "The beautiful, Niata!"]

The seniors felt a connection to Greece. It didn't matter if they were away for a year or for decades. Many of them still had relatives back in Greece and often spoke of helping their relatives, particularly during WWII. In her interview, Veli informed me that, "During the two world wars, members of our church created a club to collect money to help the villages survive. Resources were scarce. We have families that depend on us."

The Seniors Made Connections

Once the connection to Greece had been established, the seniors often chose to continue with a description of how they were connected to (or belonged) to the Greek community in the United States. This might have included a statement on their relationship to one of the original founders of the community, or a detailed account of how they ended up in the area from other parts of America. Every senior mentioned a current or deceased member of the community that helped them become established in the area, sort of like a sponsor. The speaker would continue to talk about these individuals, and events associated with them, until someone in the audience recognized and affirmed the connection; as if the speaker were still trying to establish his place in the community. The events mentioned most often were marriage, baptism, or village association.

The speaker-audience participation not only affirmed connections for the speaker, but also made everyone in the audience aware of new relationships, as new connections previously unrecognized were revealed. This added awareness created a tighter knit community for all of the participants.

The following excerpt was taken from the life story speech given by Haroula, with assistance from Veli and Haroula's daughter, Caliope. It was apparent that Haroula was recognized for sponsoring many women in the community over the years.

Veli: This is our own Haroula– the Mrs. … The mother of all mothers!
Haroula: I love you all. I was born 1905. My father was a doctor. I raised three girls and I have today 29 grandchildren and great-grandchildren and my husband was wonderful.

Veli: Tell us some of your hobbies.
Haroula: I used to sew a lot. I used to work a lot with the Philoptochos. When I moved to Minneapolis it was a very small community and we knew everybody and every one of them was a friend. I made a lot of friends.

Veli: I still see you at church and you smile at every one, it doesn't matter if you know them or not.
Toula: And Haroula don't forget, Haroula was one of the founders of the Niata Club.

Veli: You need to tell us how that – can you tell us how that started?
Haroula: My aunt, my mother, and me, and then afterwards, Dora and we were talking how we could help.

Veli: Help what?
Haroula: Well with the work that they wanted. So they brought it up at the meeting and it was approved and that's how we got started. We raised $5000.

Veli: This was back in . . .
Haroula: 1943, something like that. And then we've got a lot of memories.

Veli: And I think because of Niata Club a lot of kids want to know where there grandparents and great-grandparents came from.
Haroula: Yeah, they know more about it. They love it there. I came to Minneapolis in 1930 and I never liked to move because I liked the town and I liked the people there.

Toula: I don't have a question but I do want to say something about Haroula. When I first moved up here in 1975, I'll never forget Haroula and her wonderful hospitality and friendship that she showed me. I love you dearly and I will never forget how hospitable you were to me and my husband, God bless his soul, and my family. May God bless you and grant you many more years of health and happiness. I love you.

> Caliope: Mother and I talked a little bit about this because Haroula asked her and mom told Haroula "I'm not a speaker". And I said, "thanks, mom". This is it – I think we all love our parents and are grateful for what our parents have given us. But I think the thing about my mom, she is such a positive thinker. Just what Toula said, she's just upbeat all the time and she never says no. I mean you can never tell her no. She never says no. So she is a fun – and we're grateful for her long life. And mom and I also talked about the people at church were her friends and the people at church are still her friends and I've noticed . . . sometimes Steve and I are in a hurry to leave and she talks – everybody has got to talk to her. It's such a wonderful community in that respect, and we're all grateful for that. And her friends – she has so many life-long friends. A lot of people don't have that. To have the same friends from 1930 is just wonderful.
>
> Veli: And when Haroula celebrates her 100th birthday we're all going to be there! [I hear the seniors clapping in the background.]

Many of the seniors were direct descendents to the original founders of the Greek community and church. When they spoke about their parents, they did so with pride because they were related to someone who had such a positive impact in the Greek community. Agape described how she came to the city.

> …and so they wanted to introduce the bride, the Nimphi, to their family and friends here in [the city]. Well I was very glad to have the opportunity to meet all of these people. A lot of them are not here today and I did have the chance to meet so many of them and a lot of them were Barbers' family and 80 % of them are related to my husband whether they are simpatheri, koumbaries, second cousins. So there are many relationships all over and everyone is close. Anyway it was a lot of fun. So there are relations everywhere, so we stayed here in the [city] a few days and then got on the train again and we went to F___. It was the first time in my life that I ever saw snow. [The seniors laugh at this statement.] And I thought it was beautiful and to this day it is beautiful. But anyway the people there in F___ welcomed me into the Kootsa family. Their friends, relatives and they all welcomed me with open arms and they loved me and I loved them. It was a small town of 30,000. You can't compare that to [my hometown], but you know what? That didn't bother me one bit. I was very very happy and it was just a lot of fun being in F___ all those years with the families and all those relatives. One of my dearest friends in F___ was Caliope's mother, Haroula. Actually, Caliope is my god daughter. I am her nonna.

I heard a lot of "ahs" in the background, as if the audience just learned something new and important. Then I heard someone say, "I'm real proud of you!" I later discovered that it was Caliope herself who had said that.

The following excerpts from other transcriptions further illustrate how important community connections were to the seniors.

> I am going to tell you a little bit of my life. My father came to America with 200 youths from the area of Sparta around 1881. A man by the name of George was in charge. They traveled through Europe by way of M___. They arrived in C___ [the United States] where Mr. George put them up in a room – 200 boys, 18-20 years old. After their arrival in C___, he bought each person a push wagon and they were in business selling one product a day. In 1900, a couple of gentlemen went back to Greece to get married. They were nice enough to escort my mother back to C___ where her father and younger brother had arrived a few years before. When my father saw my mother who was 18 years old, he was sure he wanted to marry her. The wedding took place in December 1901 at the Holy Trinity Church – every Greek was invited. The story is that there were 98 carriages that attended the reception at the German Athletic Club known as the Budheim or something like that. And they had barrels of chicken, 12 lambs. Amongst the guests was the father of Christina and the father of the late Paul. (Michael)

> I attended L___ High School as did Greg and her sister. We're all graduates of L___ High School. I attended F___ Academy and studied designing. At that time there were many couturier shops on Michigan Avenue that are no longer there. Not much later, I met my husband through his brother and came to the city after a honeymoon trip to Greece and Europe in 1929. I was not here for any length of time when I was elected secretary of the Niata Club and had to write the minutes in Greek. Can you imagine an American Greek writing minutes in Greek? We were members of St. George's Church but later we joined St. Mary's. There we had a group that was still called Mother's Club. My children were going to Greek School at that time – later Philoptochos was organized in the early 1960s. I was president. Earlier in 1936 we had organized the Daughters of Penelope and were responsible for the organization. It is responsible for the newly re-build HUD house that we dedicated a few weeks ago. (Helen)

> I wanted to tell you – when I got married, I was singing in the choir and I sang in the choir from 1926 . . . in fact one of the P____ girls that married into the K___ family, sang in the choir with me and she also sang until recently in the choir in M___. She was in the choir with us – she went to [school with me] too. (Toula)

I mention these examples to show that the seniors went to any length to affirm their place in the Greek community. The idea of community was very important and relationships were taken very seriously. Once you became a nonna (God Parent), for example, you were committed to that child for life and you literally became a part of that child's family. In the community's eyes, a nonna held just as much responsibility for the child as that child's parents.

Even I had to prove my connection to the Greek community before the seniors became comfortable with including me in their discussions. I was constantly asked questions about my birthplace (Iraklion, Crete, Greece) and which church I attended growing up (St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Pittsburgh, PA). It was also immensely helpful that I spoke Greek; I do not believe that the seniors would have granted me interviews, or allowed me to participate in the table talk if I had not been Greek.

Growing Up Greek

Many childhood memories presented in the life stories revolved around having to attend Greek school at the church. Janet, for instance, remembered having to go to Greek School after coming home from public school.

> Having Greek parents, meant that we had to learn to speak Greek and write Greek. After school [American] we would come home and rest and have a treat, and then off to Greek School we would go, three times a week.

Peter had similar recollections.

> All the Greek families that lived around there…wanted to live around the church so there were many of our family relatives and friends that lived around St. Mary's church. And the church and the Greek school was a big part of the lives of all of us, the first generation Greek kids do you remember it? We all had our

> Greek school. After we got through with public school at 3:15 what happened? Go home, get a sandwich, and go to Greek school. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays was my days. Other kids it would be Tuesday, Thursday, and sometimes Saturday.

And while most seniors readily admitted that they did not like Greek school, everyone recognized that it was a fact of life.

> What we, Greek kids had to do. While our American friends played after public school, we had to go to Greek school. (Michael, life story presentation, July 5, 2005)

Every speaker also mentioned some aspect of the Greek home. Petros and Veli for example, spoke about the expectations for girls versus boys.

> Petros: Even though some of us couldn't speak Greek, there were expectations you had to meet. And the parents decided what those things were – not you.
>
> I asked: And you're looking at expectations for the children, were the expectations the same for boys and girls?
>
> Petros: We were expected to marry Greek girls.
>
> Veli: Well, see they were all boys, so there was nothing for them to compare. And in my . . . yes, it was very different. I had to be very careful. I couldn't do this, I couldn't do that.
>
> I asked: And the boys could?
>
> Veli: Oh the boys could – they could stay out, they could go have a drink, I guess. I could never go without somebody going with me.
>
> Petros: Chaperone.
>
> Veli: I couldn't go down to the park alone. I had to be with a brother. You know, others said the same. Hearing the stories bring back memories.

During her presentation, Agape mentioned what it was like growing up with other Greek families.

> We grew up playing with other children in the neighborhood at each others' homes, where my family knew three to four other Greek families.

This statement evoked several comments from the seniors seating around me.

> Our house was a refuge for my uncles, aunts, cousins, and people from Niata. I remember someone always being in the house.

> I remember many ceremonies at our house… we celebrated weddings and baptisms. Everyone [in the Greek community] was invited!

> Michael, you know, the house was an important gathering place for us Greeks. It started before the church was built. The priest would come to do the ceremonies and everyone would come and stay after that. Now it is different. We have our church. We celebrate here.

The happy childhood experiences included in the life story presentations often triggered a great deal of discussion around the tables. The talk would generally include fond recollection of similar experiences; however, a few seniors did mention some darker memories. I remember Liza getting very antsy and frustrated as we listened to some of the seniors sitting around our table painting a rosy picture of their home life. She finally interrupted the group to say,

> Fond memories, hah! I remember being a prisoner in my own home. Do this, do that, and oh did I get it if I questioned my mother. I can still remember the sting of her slap! [Her hand reflexively goes to her left cheek. Her cheeks turn a deep red as she recounts this memory. Steve, her husband, gently puts his hand on her arm.]

Later in the discussion, Liza readily admitted that, even though she had painful memories from childhood, she still wanted to hear the stories.

> I need to hear others talk about their experiences. Growing up, I was forced to act this way or that way. I didn't feel I could be me. I went to American school and saw how happy my friends were. I was so free and happy with them. They would invite me to go home with them and I would have to make things up, you know, because my mom said no to the "Amerikanides! [American women, derogatory expression]" she would tell me that they were immoral. I couldn't talk with her. She wouldn't listen. In the end, I stopped trying. I love my mom, but I hated her

> for not understanding. Now, I hear that Haroula and Tia had the same experiences! I would cry myself to sleep. I thought I was bad, my mom said so. Why couldn't I be a good Greek girl? Like my other Greek friends! But I was a good Greek girl! I did as I was told. What else could I do? Here, I get to talk about growing up. I get to hear what it was like for others too.

Evangelo's recollections were similar to Liza's. He shared the following with me while we waited in line to get lunch.

> Evangelo: I heard Liza. [He nods in her direction-she is standing a few meters ahead of us.] I, too, remember what it was like. [pause]
>
> I asked: How was it for you, Evangelo? I whispered so no one else would hear our conversation.
>
> Evangelo: I was the oldest, so much was expected of me. [He shook his head ever so slightly; I almost missed it.] I was constantly reminded- we came to America for you and your sisters, for you to get a good education, for you to have a bright future. [He counted off each statement one-by-one on the fingers of his right hand.] I was afraid to disappoint them. I went to American school, I went to Greek school, I studied hard- two, three hours a day. Every day my mamma would say, "Evangelo, how is school?" I would say, "Good mamma. I like school." She would smile, nod, and walk away. I was afraid to disappoint my parents.
>
> I asked: Me too, Evangelo. My mother pretty much said the same thing except she would add, we want you to become a doctor.
>
> Evangelo: Doctor, yeah Lawyer, too. [He laughed] It was hard enough growing up but when she started talking about sacrifice this and sacrifice that … Did your mother mention making sacrifices?
>
> I asked: All the time. [Evangelo grunted.]

Earlier I stated that Fasching and deChant (2001) used the term "sacred" to define a group of people who have lived similar experiences and therefore shared a common identity. They see themselves "as human while they see all others as profane of less than human." And

that the sacred generated a morality "expressed in narratives of mistrust and hostility toward the stranger"- toward any individual who does not share a common identity with them.

The life story speeches enabled the seniors to revisit both good and bad experiences from their lives and in the process they discovered that some individuals had difficulty following the parental or community's strict rules that forbade contact with anyone outside of the Greek community. Some of the seniors were still resentful many decades after the fact that restrictions were placed on who they could interact with- especially outside of the community. Veli shared with me how strange she felt being followed by Greek women after a football game because she was in the company of a teenage American boy.

> How strange. Isn't that interesting? Here I am a grown woman and they are following me. He was just a friend. He wanted to escort me home after the game. I kept looking back and there they were. Staring right at me like I did something wrong.

Marriage

The expectation within the Greek community was that everyone would find a Greek spouse. Arranged marriages were the norm; usually with the assistance of a matchmaker.

> Yeah, in the old days there used to be matchmakers – you didn't go out and find somebody . . . "man, this gal turns me on" you know. The parents would make arrangements with Kumbare [extended family] or somebody else in the community. "You got a daughter, I got a son, let's get them together. (Petros)

One of the more memorable conversations we had at my table involved arranged marriages.

> You see [Toula wagged her finger at me], we are old, but we can remember what it was like. [All the seniors at our table nodded in agreement]. You kids have it so easy now; boy did I get it when I was young! You hear that? We all had to deal with that! Our parents were strict! Oh boy, were they strict! You didn't cross them. Oh no, you didn't! Her story, I understand her story. (Toula)

The speaker had just told the group how she had no say in who she was going to marry. Her parents had made arrangements with the parents of her future husband. She recalled being

introduced to the man as a young teenager and feeling distraught at the thought of marrying someone she knew nothing about. She just had to trust that her parents would find the right person for her. Toula reacted strongly to the speaker's experience.

> [With fire in her eyes] Are you kidding me? Marry me off? Oh, my father and brothers tried! Ha! I wouldn't have that. I was going to marry the man of my dreams!
>
> "And did you find him? I asked.
>
> She got a far-away look on her face, and after several seconds replied, "Yeah, I found him."
>
> Her smile was infectious. I found myself grinning back at her. I couldn't resist asking. "Was he a good Greek boy?"
>
> She slapped my arm with her hand and yelled, "Of course he was. It was love at first sight!" [The seniors at our table burst out in laughter.] (Toula)

The seniors discussed how their experiences compared to those mentioned by the speaker- in this case arranged marriages. They often had much in common, but the seniors also recognized that similar experiences elicited completely different opinions and emotions. For example, some were very happy with their marriage, and therefore, felt that the practice of arranging marriages was good. Others were not happy that their marriage was arranged and viewed the practice of arranging marriages in a very negative way. Only by sharing could the seniors understand that an experience could be viewed from a different perspective. Regardless of how they felt about arranged marriages, almost all of their marriages were arranged. The seniors had followed the strict rules of their society.

Earlier I quoted Fasching and deChant (2001) as stating that a society's way of life is expressed in "sacred" customs. These sacred customs provide the members of a society meaning and dictate how members are to act within the society.

The seniors also discovered that while most upheld the same customs, like arranged marriages, some within their group went beyond not just liking them, they decided not to follow them at all and broke away from that tradition entirely! Fasching and deChant (2001) differentiated between a "sacred" society which is founded on a shared set of answers, with a "holy" community which they say is founded on experiences of openness to the infinite. A "holy" community, for instance, does not recognize a pre-established way of doing things; it asks its members to consider and "act on new possibilities."

This is exactly what some Greek men did. They broke from tradition and married non-Greek women. They could not find mates within the community or did not have the resources to find a mate in Greece and then pay for her passage to America. They decided to look outside the Greek community for spouses and found them. Unfortunately, those couples often experienced hardships because the Greek community did not accept them. They went against the established rules of their ethnocentric community. They brought the stranger in their midst.

Maria, who was not Greek, experienced this first hand. "If you really want to know how it was like see me after the meeting," she told me. Her husband, Peter, tried to stop her from talking with me, but she was adamant. He placed his hand on her arm, but she pulled away and stared him down. It seemed to me that the other seniors sitting around the table knew how she felt. "It's okay if she wants to talk to Michael. Peter, it's okay." I was looking at Maria and did not see the speaker, but believe it was Toula. Peter nodded and said, "Yes," while Maria repeated, "Okay, after the meeting."

"Thank you for wanting to speak with me, Maria." Her husband waited in the hall while we spoke. He kept looking our way, but did not approach.

> Yes, I want you to know that these Greeks [she waved her hands in a large circle] make it sound sooo nice. They have such nice experiences. They talk about this

> person and what that person did and it sounds so good. Doesn't it? Did they help me? Did they accept me? No! [She was very angry] I had no support. Many years I was alone. [She shook her head some more and waves her hands in front of her] What could I do? I did the best to raise my family. It got better after the children came.

When I asked her what she meant when she said that she was alone for many years, she responded,

> I tried, Peter said, "Be patient." But I see how it was. Others here [she pointed to the now empty room] they had each other. They were together. Me? I had no one. I felt, who will talk to me? I can bake, I'm a good cook, I can learn to make baklava, bread for Pascha [Easter] why don't you ask me? [She sighed and looked down at her feet. I felt very sad for her, but remained silent. I glanced over at Peter who now looked really angry.] Not even here [she gestured to mean the church]. I was alone [she hugged herself]. Why? I married Peter because I love him. We talked about family, being in the community, coming to church. I thought "Yes, yes that is what I want!" But no, [She shook her head]. That's it. You should know. [She glanced toward Peter, who immediately hurried to her side. Half- hugging, half- supporting her in his arms, he led her out to the parking lot.]

It was common practice for the Greek women to phone each other daily and to get together often in their homes, as Toula explained, "for some good gossip." The women would also get together at the fellowship hour that was held in the gymnasium following Sunday morning liturgy. For Maria to be so isolated, to feel unwanted both in and out of church must have been unbearable for her. And unfortunately, Maria's story was not unusual. Veli and Petros shared the following story during the interview at their home.

> Petros: It was a small congregation and we'd have dinners and everybody would bring something down to the church.
>
> Veli: After Anastase (Resurrection) or the next day at Easter time?
>
> Petros: Well, hey, it all depends on what was going on at that time. But I know that all the non-Greek ladies used to scrub, every Saturday, scrub the whole church on their hands and knees. The Greek ladies, that was below their dignity.

> Veli: Oh, you remember that. That's interesting, isn't it?
>
> Petros: And that's why they had an Acropolis Club down here because those that couldn't speak Greek could converse. They had families who were going to the same church, you know, but they felt . . .
>
> Veli: Pushed to the side a little bit.
>
> Petros: On the side – yeah.

This last statement was very similar to what Maria told me in the hallway. Later on in the interview, Veli mentioned that Petros's mom, who was not Greek, was an exception to the rule.

> Anyway, that whole point was – I was just going to say . . . oh, and so they always – the Greek ladies – I don't know about the men because I don't know how they felt, but they kind of had to put any ladies down if they weren't Greek. Even if they could speak . . . ??, they'd say that kind of behind their back. But with Mama because she was so involved in our family, I didn't feel that at all because she was just a part of everything else.

Still later in the interview, Veli shared a tragic event that happened to an uncle who had married a Syrian lady.

> We had a tragic thing happen in our family. Absolutely tragic. My dad had four brothers and a sister here in this country – he had a couple more over in Greece. And the oldest brother when he was here – and in those days, like Petros said there weren't a lot of Greeks. [Implying Greek ladies to marry.] He married a Syrian lady and he married her and they had eight children, but because she was Syrian, Uncle Michael, I guess was having some business problems too plus his wife did not feel accepted by my aunts and uncles or whoever they were at that time. And she felt so terrible and so neglected and her life was a little different because she was carrying on her own traditions and so she would come, I guess, and feel very inferior. My Uncle Michael, took out a gun one night and they say – they say . . . it was in the papers, I guess – and he killed himself. He killed himself in front of four of their children. Now she heard within the time that that happened – within those few days – that one of my aunts felt so bad of course about their brother and was going to take the children. You take this one – my aunt and this one . . . I'll take one, you take one . . . well the mother heard this, my aunt . . . what was her name, Petros, I don't remember now. Oh my goodness . . . Melinna or something like that. When she heard this – now her family came from

> California, how she ended up here I will never now – I do not know. And so she picked up all of her children – where she got the money, she must have gotten it from somewhere from her husband or I don't know.
>
> Petros: Her family probably.
>
> Veli: And she went on a train and she raised all of her children in California.

The Acropolis Club was created to give inter-racial couples a place to meet and socialize with others of their kind. Please refer back to Chapter Three: St. Mary's was used to address social issues to learn, for more on the Acropolis Club.

Experiences Outside Of The Greek Community

The seniors often shared events that, in retrospect, they found very funny. The events spoke about their attempts to interact outside of the Greek community. Paula, for example, told a story of an encounter she had with an American stranger when she first arrived in America. The humor stemmed from the fact that many of the seniors had similar experiences.

> Well, I was tired of staying in the house all day. So I decided to go walking. While my husband, rest his soul, wanted to protect me, like all of our men folk did [I heard many seniors yell different forms of acknowledgement], so he said, "No you stay in the house while I go to work." I looked at him, really looked at him hard and said "No, I will go out, I did not come all this way to be a prisoner in my own home." He left mad, but that's okay, right ladies? [Many of the women laughed at this, while the men pretended not to understand what she was talking about. Toula looked at me, winked and nodded her head to make sure I understood] So I put my coat on and walked outside. Well [She started to laugh, while everyone was waiting for her to finish her story] this man bumps into me. He looks at me and says, "I'm psari." Well I did nothing wrong. I'm thinking to myself. Why did he call me a "psari"? I got mad and said back to him, "If I'm psari, then you are a ktapodi!" [Everyone broke out into very loud laughter. Paula waited for the laughter to die down] "Well, that night when my Peter got home I told him what happened. He starts howling so hard he starts to cry. He bends over holding his sides. I looked at him and said, "Why are you laughing at me?" Now I'm really mad. I said, "I did nothing wrong." And he says, "No, no, matia mou [a term of endearment meaning "you are my eyes"] you did nothing wrong. He grabs me, holds me close and tells me, "The man was saying he was sorry he bumped

> you, that's all, he was not calling you a fish [the Greek word for fish is psari and is pronounced sorry]! I said to my Peter, "Oh no, I was mad and called him ktapodi [the Greek word for octopus is ktapodi]. Don't worry he knows not what you meant! We both start laughing. Next day, I went walking. But I did not see the man again. I learned that day that when you bump into someone you say, "I'm sorry!" [Everyone clapped, as she finished her story.]

Steve told a story of how he thought the streets in America were paved with gold.

> Well we all heard back in Greece that everyone in America was rich. Well I couldn't wait to get here myself and get rich too. I remember getting off the boat. We arrived in Ellis Island, in New York. You know, many of us did that. Anyway I was literally looking up and down the streets because the stories told back home [referring to Greece] was that the streets in America were paved with gold. Boy was I surprised, I didn't see any gold.

Steve also mentioned several other things that were funny in retrospection.

> There is something as immigrants that we find different in the new country, we go and we face embarrassment. I want to share with you a story. I went to buy a cappelo [a hat] when the boat stopped in Italy to pick up more passengers, because I knew that everyone in America wore a hat. So I get to the United States here and have my hat on and see that not all the young people are wearing hats.
>
> Another time I was walking in C___ with my cousin and saw a dime in the streets. My cousin said to me don't pick it up, don't pick it up, he was embarrassed. And I was thinking if people don't pick up dimes in the street, I had come to a very wealthy country because they have money to spare. But of course I found out quite differently later in my life.
>
> We always mispronounced words that make other people laugh. Has this happened to you? It happened to me. But especially for me who was a teacher for many years. I could not afford to mispronounce words, I kept practicing…s h e e t." [I heard many seniors laughing.]

"We all do, don't we kiddos?" Veli responded to the statement of mispronouncing words. The seniors had used humor throughout their lives to deal with all sorts of difficult situations, so it is no wonder that they enjoyed the jokes Veli told at every meeting.

Seniors Reflected On Their Identity

As I sat and listened to the life story presentations, I started to form an opinion of who they were based on the experiences they were mentioning. I decided to include the following question during the interviews, "How would you describe yourself? Who are you?" If I had already interviewed a senior, I went back to ask them the question as a follow-up to their interview. The seniors' responded by describing themselves either as being a Greek or as being a Greek-American; no senior though described themselves solely as being an American.

> I would consider myself a Greek American; no question about it. (Toula)

> Different, but the same. We knew how to act with this set of people at school. We knew how to act but we also knew that we belonged somewhere else. These are just people – they're wonderful people but they're not us. We felt very different. And I really feel for the people that come over from the other countries now and they don't fit in. They don't fit in because they don't allow themselves to fit in – just like we didn't. (Veli)

> You'll never lose . . . well, I have to speak for myself but I would imagine for a lot of other Greeks, not 100% but for the majority of the, you never lose your identity and I can still interpret for people in hospitals and sometimes in courts. And I translate documents. My wife, just the other day she went and recorded Greek documents for some outfit….We visit the old country every three years. I don't think we ever lost our identity but at the same time, I can say we have been assimilated in the sense that we're happy in this country. Our children got married and have their own kids – we have seven grandchildren. [Two their children married other Greeks while the third married an American] And so I kept my identity but at the same time, I have an American identity. So you'd say we are bi-lingual and bi-cultural. At home we may cook Greek food or we may cook American food. (Steve)

> We do have friends who are Greek friends so we go out, but one of them is inter-marriage, even though she knows a little bit of Greek but she doesn't know enough so when we are together, we don't talk Greek. We talk English – because of that one person who does not understand. But even us Greeks sometimes when we are together, we speak in English. (Hope)

> I know that I'm in-between two countries. But I changed a lot when I came here. I see some things I don't like there. [Referring to Greece.] So that means I changed a lot. And I'm very upset when I hear that they criticize the Americans. So that means that after so many years I became, part of me – America. And part of me is Greek. (Hope)

> I think that it's wonderful that we live in this country and I'm glad it's America and I wouldn't live anywhere else but I still feel that we should really hang on to some of our past and some of the things that everybody else doesn't have. I mean – how many people . . . we didn't spend a dime learning Greek and now they're going to school and college to try and learn Greek. It comes so natural and we're beginning to lose it because we're not using it. And our children . . . they've already lost it because there's not a need for it but I cannot tell you how wonderful it is to speak another language. (Anna)

> I think I'm a Greek American. Really. I love my Greek heritage and I'm proud to be an American at the same time and I can handle both of them. I feel like I could be a true Greek and a traditionalist but also love my country [America] and I could do whatever it takes to be a good citizen and do for people. I'm a doer – let's put it that way. Rather than a follower – I'm a doer. (Gladys)

Steve used the term "Greekness" when describing himself. I asked him to explain what "Greekness" means; what qualities it has. I got the following response.

> This is what we always talk about Hellenism – what is Hellenism. And sometimes I cannot describe what Hellenism is or the ideas are – our ancestors or what are the ideas of the ancestor's democracy? We always say that the Greeks brought democracy to the United States. Well this is not entirely true but they did refer Greek democracy when the founders were discussing what kind of system they would have. So we are proud of our Greekness in this way. That our ancestors achieved a lot of things in all science…So Greekness you might describe it as being a sense of belonging to nation which has made a lot of progress in all times and introduced democracy and other things which you admire. I'm proud of my Greekness. (Steve)

Almost every senior, also, described themselves as being Greek Orthodox (Christian) and that they belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. An example that illustrated this point was given to me in an interview.

> I describe myself as a Greek American. I'm proud to be a Greek. Now I went to school – grade school and high school. I never had one problem with anybody. Actually at church I remember I'd have to get a pink slip to get out of school about 10:30 so I could go to the Episcopal that was used for the service. Then I'd get back at 1:00 you know, and the kids would ask me, "Where did you go, Tom?" And I said, "Well I went to church." "Church? How come you're going to church on a weekday?" Usually I think it was on a Thursday when the priest came and I would tell them about our Greek Orthodox faith and Easter would come later – a week or two or month later. They didn't know – they didn't understand. I told them, you know – our Easter comes a month or so later. "Why?" Well I'd tell them as best as I could, you know, that it was according to the way the sun and the way that Jesus was crucified according to the way the sun was setting or something like that had to do with it. "Oh" they'd say. Never had any problems – everybody was nice. We all grew up together, all us kids. (George)

Church association is important so is naming children after the Saints venerated in the Orthodox Church.

> So the Name Days were very, very important. And my mother's name is Georgia and my father's name was George so on St. George's Day, April 23rd, we would have a big party and all of Short Falls was invited. (Gladys)

And she continued the tradition with her children, who then did likewise with their children,

> Absolutely. What I've done with my own children is I've made a big issue of their Name Days. For instance, Stephanie is after St. Stephen the first martyr and we always went out to dinner. We always made [Greek cookies] and reviewed again who they were. Nicki was named after St. Nicholas and we always did that. And Georgie was St. George which was the 23rd of April. And my daughter does it with her two boys.
>
> Well both the girls [talking about baptizing them in the Orthodox Church] –just like we did with our parents when there were special days – Name Days. (Gladys)

While most of the seniors described themselves as Greek-American, the description is not complete without also adding Greek Orthodox to it. They are Greek-American-Greek Orthodox.

The Creation Of A "Holy" Community: The Inception Of Doubt

Fasching and deChant (2001) differentiated between a "sacred" society which is founded on a shared set of answers, with a "holy" community which they say is founded on experiences of openness to the infinite. A "holy" community, for instance, does not recognize a pre-established way of doing things; it asks its members to consider and "act on new possibilities." Doubt germinates in the minds of its members, allowing them to question and challenge the dictates of the status quo.

In Chapter Three, I described how Father Gabriel was a change agent. He challenged the status quo that said this is the way things are done in the church and created a "counterculture" or a "holy" community within the "sacred" society that allowed non-Greeks entrance into St. Mary's. And earlier in this chapter in the marriage section, we discovered that some Greek men went against Greek tradition and married non-Greek women. These men too were change agents. They paved the way for other Greek men or Greek women to gain acceptance from the community if they chose to marry a non-Greek.

As the seniors reminisced about their past experiences, many questioned whether they had made the right choices in regard to Greek values and traditions. They realized that while they had believed in a pre-established way of doing things, they heard from members within their own ranks that had not behaved as they had. Some members not only considered new possibilities, they had actually acted on them. They started to experience doubt; what really were the core values they had to uphold to be Greek?

For example, some seniors chose to strictly uphold the traditions taught to them by their parents (in regard to how they raised their families); while others defended their right to break away from tradition and adopt more American values.

> We left our families behind. Who were we to ask? [Shrugged his shoulders] We're in a new country now, not the village back home. (Michael)

> I raised my family, like my father. But, I wasn't afraid to let my kids date whoever they wanted. He couldn't marry me off. What did ya think I was going to do? (Toula)

> I love America. It's not fair to say be Greek and do this and forget why we're here. This country, it's our country. But also I'm Greek. (Hope)

Although doubt tends to negate and undermine the way things are, it is not a purely negative force. The experience of doubt makes it possible for us to imagine infinite possibilities for the world as it ought to be. To the degree that we are willing to take a leap of faith and learn to trust our doubts, and to follow the trail of questions they generate; we become open to the possible rather than remain a prisoner of the actual. We ask, "Why must things remain the way they are?" or "Why couldn't things be different?" Once we experience and accept our doubt, we are freed from the tyranny of "the way things are."

During a life story presentation, Zoe had turned to me and whispered, "Michael, I did do the right thing. Didn't I?" She was upset after hearing a speaker discuss how she had arranged her daughter's marriage. Zoe had done likewise with her daughter. I was not prepared for that question, and did not know how to respond. She looked so upset that I said without thinking, "Of course you did, Zoe." I got up to get some coffee and Veli approached me to ask me if Zoe was okay. I explained what happened and asked, "What would you have said if you had talked with her?"

> Exactly what you said. That she did just right. Reassure her. Tell her not to worry. That she had to be strong. Not to doubt her decisions. That was then, that she acted for the right reasons, to take care of her family, to raise them right. To remember the good times. Be at peace. (Veli)

Veli's response was nonjudgmental. It showed that each senior, regardless of which tradition that chose to live by, was still considered a member of the community. I never observed seniors making comparisons that made anyone feel that they 'should have done this' or 'should have done that'; there was no right or wrong way to have behaved. What was important was that they did their best with the options they had available to them at the time. "Be at peace," Veli counseled them; don't possess any more lingering doubts on the choices you have made. "Be at peace," and in the process, find closure.

Chapter Six
Analysis

The past chapters describe the different experiences of the Greek-American seniors who participated in this study. I shared how they tell their stories; participate in rituals of togetherness; and seek to hold onto their Greek identity. These experiences support many of the claims of researchers presented in the literature (Kunkelman, 1990; Scourby, 1984). For example, how Greek immigrants like to live in close proximity; how they not only use the Greek Orthodox Church as the center of their community, but also to educate their children through Greek school; how they try to raise their children in an ethnic home, etc.

Experience

The literature that framed my original approach to this study, while high on the broad ideas of what it means to be Greek, is very limited in describing the Greek-American experience. It does not give a concise definition or explanation of what it means to be a Greek-American, nor does it mention what happens when there is conflict with the American experience- when the American experience intrudes on Greek values. For example, Rouvelas (2002) stated "people of Greek descent are proud to be Greek-American" (p. 160); she does not say, however, what being Greek-American means. She ties the idea of identity to Greek values and ethnicity, but does not delve into how this is so. Not all Greeks have identical values or follow the exact same traditions, so is one immigrant more Greek than another if they don't follow the same traditions? How do immigrants reconcile their differences within the community? What does the community do when one of their own chooses to move away from the norms of their society? Everyone has experiences; what types of experiences do people who call themselves Greek or Greek-American have? And finally, how did I as a Greek-American researcher negotiate the Greek-American identity and the interaction with the Greek community at St. Mary's?

Habits And Cultural Negotiation

Dewey' Critical Pragmatism can help us understand how the life experiences of the seniors in the St. Mary's community shape their Greek-American identity and how they address the challenges associated with trying to maintain that identity, particularly when issues create conflict with their Greek values. Recall that in the discussion of Dewey's Critical Pragmatism, "habits" are how we interact with one another and with our environment to obtain what we want. First through trial and error, and later through thinking, we amass the knowledge/experience of how to act in different situations and settings. Each person interacts with the environment in their own unique way, however, so the meaning derived from what appear to be similar experiences to those of someone else may be entirely different. In the end, each person has their own interpretation of what an experience means. (Dewey, 1922)

The seniors and their families, for example, emigrated from Greece with an established set of habits. Upon arriving in America, they came together and formed a community that recreated the society they had left behind. Proper conduct within this community was based on the societal norms (habits) transplanted from Greece. Ethnic values were preserved by sending their children to Greek school to learn Greek language and traditions, and by socializing, as much as possible, with only those in the Greek community.

Yet everyone, at one point or another, found themselves in new situations where their Greek habits did not work. They were forced to change how they did things, which led to the formation of new habits. Each person had to adapt based on his or her own circumstances, so every person did not acquire the same habits. The women, for example, were often the last to learn English. They did not use the language at home and tended to go outside of the Greek community infrequently. The men and children tended to learn English quickly as they spent a

lot of time outside of the Greek community; the children were at school, and the men were at their place of employment.

Why then should we turn to Dewey? Dewey's theory explains not only how new habits were formed in the Greek community, but also helps us understand that life is complex and quite dynamic; the arsenal of things (experiences) we come into situations with may not always be enough, so that in the end, we are forced to learn new ways to interact with the world around us. These seniors combined "old world" habits transplanted from Greece with newly learned "American" habits to enable them to function in either cultural setting. In some cases, Greek and American traditions were blended with little impact on the Greek community. For example, the seniors choose to celebrate birthdays and Name Days, where only Name Days were celebrated in Greece; the Independence Days of both Greece (March 15th) and America (July 4th); and Christmas on December 25th instead of January 7th, as is the Greek custom. By choosing to celebrate in both traditions, the seniors are able to have "American" experiences while still considering themselves as simply Greek.

Contingency And New Cultural Identity

However, a purely Greek identity does not hold up under more serious environmental pushes, such as inter-ethnic marriage. The community first responded to this issue by adopting the purely Greek approach which was to forbid marriage to a non-Greek. With the lack of available Greek women, however, the men eventually married non- Greeks anyway. How did the community respond when some of its members violated its dictates?

According to decision participation contingency theory (Vroom & Jago, 1988), the Greek community acted like an organization to address this issue. Vroom and Jago identified theoretically the effectiveness of a decision depends upon: the importance of the decision quality and acceptance; the amount of relevant information possessed by everyone in the organization;

the likelihood that everyone will cooperate in trying to make a good decision if allowed to participate; and the amount of disagreement within the organization with respect to their preferred alternatives.

This theory accurately describes the Greek community's behavior; most members wanted to maintain their customs and traditions so the community's first response was to ban marriage to a non-Greek. After Greek men began marrying non-Greek spouses and the presence of non-Greeks could not be prevented, Greek members minimized the impact of non-Greeks in the community by ostracizing those inter-married couples. The videotapes of the life story presentations, with the ensuing table discussions, show how this issue affected the seniors. Men question, "There wasn't a Greek woman available for me to marry so I married someone else. Did that make me less Greek?" And women question "Was it right that I excluded the non-Greek women from participating in our (Greek) social activities?" or "Was it right that I relegated the menial tasks, like cleaning the church, to the non-Greek women?"

While the severity of the community's response has diminished over time and the community is much more accepting of the practice of marrying non-Greeks, biases still exist today. The seniors are still considering how they should act when non-Greeks are introduced into the community. By discussing these experiences, the seniors are re-examining the meaning of those experiences and re-defining how they see themselves.

Empathetic Projection And Imagination

The process of re-examining the meaning of life experiences by this community of seniors can be best understood by looking at Fesmire's (2003) work on Moral Imagination. Fesmire (2003) stated that two "imaginations" recur as themes in Dewey's writings (p. 65). The first is "empathetic projection- a form of direct responsiveness involving empathy that is "the animating mold of moral judgment" (p. 65). Empathetic projection occurs when "taking the

attitudes of others stirs us beyond numbness so we pause to sort through others' aspirations, interests, and worries as our own" (p. 65).

The second "imagination" involves "creatively tapping a situation's possibilities." Fesmire (2003) says that "imagination for Dewey is the capacity to concretely perceive what is before us in light of what could be. Its opposite is experience narrowed by acclimation to standardized meanings or habits. Imaginative experience ventures beyond restatements of convention to grasp undisclosed opportunities and to generate new ideals and ends." Both aspects of imagination, empathy and creative tapping of possibilities, operate simultaneously to allow us to deliberate on a situation in the present, yet expand our attention beyond what is immediately experienced so that the lessons of the past, embodied in habits and as-yet-unrealized potentialities, "come home to us and have power to stir us" (p. 65).

We are then able to hunt for ways to settle the difficulties of a problematic situation by scoping out alternatives and picturing ourselves taking part in them. Dewey considers these deliberations as a mental "dramatic rehearsal", where imagination tells one what experience he would get if he were to follow out on given desires or impulses (visceral reactions to things that disturb us) before actually acting upon them (Fesmire, 2003, p. 74).

In moral deliberation, ethical intentions or ends (what an individual means to do) are achieved by resolving a conflict of impulses through reflection. However, this process is beset by difficulties. The perceived satisfaction of following an original impulse may vie with the satisfaction of following a mediated course (a struggle traditionally dubbed "desire versus duty"). Conflicting factors, and the doubt surrounding these factors, kindle a search for ways to resolve the conflicts and make circumstances manageable. Or, the various intentions may conflict, so that an individual must either eliminate some of their intentions or "discover a still

more comprehensive aim in which the claims of the conflicting intentions shall be adjusted" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 73). Deliberation continues until we are stimulated to act on a course that appears to harmonize pressing interests, needs, and other factors of the situation.

The seniors began videotaping the life story presentations as a "feel good" exercise; to bring all the seniors closer by having them celebrate life's events and reminisce about their past in glorious overtones that highlight their accomplishments in the Greek community. An unintended consequence of the life story presentations, however, is that many of the seniors doubt what their experiences really mean when varying, and at times conflicting, perspectives are presented and discussed.

The seniors' deliberations are interactive, not only in the sense that the consequences of each other's actions are taken into consideration, but also in the sense that conversation with each other provides a means for reflection. As a result critical issues, such as acceptance of inter-ethnic marriage, and accommodating non-Greeks in the Greek Orthodox Church are perceived in a new way, new habits are allowed to emerge, and doubts and conflicts are brought toward closure. Through this process of moral deliberation, the seniors are able to resolve conflicting viewpoints and reach a communal response.

Re-Imagining Michael

In "Gaining Access" of the Methodology Chapter, I mentioned that I had to commit on a personal level in order to conduct this study and get to the data. Dewey's work on empathetic projection and imagination predicts and explains that I too, as a participant observer, would be affected by interacting with the study subjects; particularly as the seniors and I share many similar life experiences.

At the start of the study I considered myself an American. I had relinquished my ties to the Greek community, many years ago when I chose to marry a non-Greek. I still remember my

mother's hurtful words when I told her I was going to propose to my wife of twenty-six years, "I'll never forgive you if your sister marries a non-Greek." To appease her, we got married in a private ceremony in a Greek Orthodox Church the week before the wedding at my wife's church. Yes, we were married twice. It did not help that the Orthodox priest called my wife a "heathen" during the pre-wedding meetings. How could I attend a church whose priest considered my wife a heathen? The irony was that she attended church twice as often as me and was much more devout. So following the weddings, my wife and I chose to attend a Presbyterian Church. Being called a heathen by Toula when we first met reminded me why I had left the Orthodox Church in the first place. I also chose to not speak Greek in the home and did not encourage my son to learn or speak Greek.

But being with the seniors, not only observing and documenting their interactions, but also actively taking part in their rituals of togetherness, forced me to reconsider how I feel about my Greek heritage. I have talked about the transformational aspect of the seniors club meetings. The seniors were not the only people affected- I was too.

Midway through this study, I invited my parents to move close to me. I remember my wife asking, "Are you sure, really sure you want your parents to come live in the same state as us?" "Yes, I'm sure. We can find them a nice apartment close to our house." I had replied. What was I doing? My parents lived in N.Y. close to my sister and I lived six states away in the upper Midwest. Our interactions were limited to an occasional phone call and an annual Christmas visit for my son to see his grandparents. The decision to invite them to move closer was driven by the change of attitude I was experiencing as I interacted with the seniors and a discussion I had with my mother during that year's annual visit.

The trip began with a difficult eleven hundred mile drive to New York. A heavy snowfall had significantly extended our trip. I was upset with the weather delay and struggling to reconcile negative feelings toward my parents with the numerous positive interactions I was having with the seniors in this study.

Several nights later, I was sitting at the kitchen table. My mamma was preparing the evening meal. My dad was reading his Greek newspaper while my wife was reading a children's book to our son. Mamma looked over and informed me that I didn't have to sit in the kitchen with her, "Go ahead. Go be with everyone else in the living room." "No, I'll keep you company." I responded. As I sat there, I remembered being in the kitchen with her as she cooked all of my favorites: mousaka, pastitso, roast lamb, and sfougato (French fried potatoes in scrambled eggs). When I mentioned those memories, she put down the knife and just stood there looking out into space. "Ti eene, mamma? Ise kala? (What is it, mamma? Are you well?) She looked at me. She was distraught. "Mihalaki mou, me singhoras?" (My little Michael, do you forgive me?) "Ti les, den se katalaveno." (What are you saying, I don't understand you) But I did understand. Zoe expressed the exact same sentiment when listening to another senior discuss how she had arranged her daughter's marriage. I got up and hugged my mamma. As she started to cry, I whispered almost word for word what Veli had told me when I tried to reassure Zoe. "Mamma, katalaveno. Ekanes oti mporouses. Imaste monohi. Den ehame kanena na mas voithese. Na se voithese. Katalaveno tora poli kala. Esi prepi na me singhoresis emena pou imouna olo agrios. Pou den katalavena pos esee eesouna." (Mamma, I understand. You did what you could. We were alone. We didn't have anyone to help us. To help you. I now understand very well. You have to forgive me for always being angry. For not trying to understand how you felt.)

Through this study, I found reconciliation with my parents and renewed acceptance of my Greek heritage. We had a very good Christmas and that summer, my wife and I moved my parents to our state. We live within a few miles of each other and car pool to the Greek Orthodox Church on Sundays to worship as a family.

Metaphors

Another common theme in the life story presentations, aside from community issues, is the pressure these seniors felt to uphold the expectations of the community. For example, many seniors mention that their parents used the phrase "Be a Good Greek girl/boy." To the children within the Greek community, this phrase is actually a metaphor that represents an entire list of rules that have to be followed: go to Greek school, don't socialize/date/marry the xeno (stranger or non-Greek), etc.

Metaphors are "conceptual mappings that project knowledge and inference patterns from one domain to another" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 84), from the physical to the mental. When understood and accepted by an entire community, the metaphors tie the individuals together in a "sacred" (this is how it has always been done in the Greek community) way of doings things (Fasching & deChant, 2001). They become part of the cultural heritage; so deeply ingrained that they require no conscious thought, resist change, and often prejudice and/or limit possible courses of action. For this reason, metaphors hold power over members to act according to the dictates of the society. They do not lose their power over time. Recall that one senior still feels remorse because, "Mamma said I was not a good Greek girl,"- even though she is referring to an incident that happened in childhood.

Fesmire (2003) summarized this by saying "the upshot of metaphor for imagination is that our sense of who we are, how we understand situations, how we relate to others, and what

we see as possible courses of action all depend significantly on culturally inherited metaphors and models. Because metaphors are social habits that emerge through embodied interactions as organized means of comprehension, adaptation, and adjustment, they are structured and checked by experience, they can either add or take away from deliberative action" (p. 86).

Moral deliberation of issues, whether personal or communal, allows the seniors to reconstruct the meaning placed on past experiences. And since metaphors are tied to those experiences, the value given to existing metaphors are re-examined as the seniors attempt to balance the rigid ethnic dictates of the community with the realities of living in America.

By sharing their experiences, the seniors were building a democracy, which Dewey defines as "primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 105); a way of life that encourages intimacy in relationships while respecting individual liberties.

This democratic ethic is also apparent during deliberations regarding changes within the Greek Orthodox Church. The seniors create a positive environment that brings factions together to tear down the "sacred" (Fasching & deChant, 2001) walls that defended the "this is the way we do things in the Greek community." A more inclusive community is established for both Greek and non-Greek members so that "integrative values may emerge to reconstruct and harmonize, albeit tenuously, conflicting desires and appraisals so that different individuals and groups can reinforce one another and their values accord" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 106).

The democratic ethic introduces a new "metaphor of participation" that affects how the seniors see themselves both in the church and out in the community. Through deliberation, for example, members concede that "Greek does not have to be the language of the faithful" in order to worship in the Orthodox Church. The admonishment of you must "Be a good Greek girl/boy,"

or the stigma of: you are not like us because you married a non- Greek, or you are not like us because you are a non-Greek, are put in a new perspective.

This more inclusive and accepting environment enables the seniors to participate by: using both Greek and English when reciting the "Lord's Prayer" or calling out the Bingo numbers; celebrating both Name Days and Birthdays by singing and adapting the lyrics to "Happy Birthday" so that every senior is recognized; and inviting every senior to give a life story speech. Now the phrases, "Did you give a life story speech?", or yelling out "Bingo!", or singing, "Happy Birthday and Name Day to you!", have the power to unite all members of the seniors club.

The act of participating in the meetings, especially in having the freedom to artistically express themselves by "starring in" and producing a video tape is a liberating, and at the same time, uniting experience. These seniors' lives are dramatic narratives that interlock as major and minor characters that take part in other dramas. Their moral drama is not scripted in advance. Every person taking part and every action taken has implications, because we "cannot circumscribe in advance what behaviors will be morally significant and insignificant, and that morality does not have a fixed form, because any act, no matter how seemingly innocuous, could potentially have morally significant consequences" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 117).

Every part played, and every action taken, is woven together so that they do not merely accumulate, but rather culminate in a set of new habits that provide the seniors with a meaningful way of interacting. They seek to create community in a world that supplies no ready-made answers, so they make a fully human effort to combine experimentation, reflection and discussion, awareness of consequences, emotional commitment, tentative resolutions, and

imaginative projection of results to obtain individual and communal meaning to their interactions.

Dewey (Fesmire, 2003) says that interaction between people is art where "art is the most direct and complete manifestation there is of experience as experience", where "the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience" (p. 109). For example, the seniors open every meeting with "The Lord's Prayer", first recited in English and then in Greek. Thus, language is not an issue; everyone is able to participate in the corporate prayer as one people of the Orthodox faith. The fact that they pray together, regardless of the language used, is a step toward establishing a common identity.

This is what constitutes "art" for Dewey; where imagination is the capacity to "weld together all elements, no matter how diverse in ordinary experience, into a new and completely unified experience" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 66). It is by participating in this common experience known as prayer, more so than the fact that they recite the "Lord's Prayer" in a specific language that unites the seniors.

Aesthetic Representation As Cultural Conservation And Creation Of Hybrid Identity

The analysis of this study starts with the idea of habits and what happens when habitual behaviors do not work, then moves on to the concept of moral imagination and of reconstruction of self in the environment using imagination. However, there is still something deeper to consider. The videotapes of the life story presentations are an aesthetic experience of living. We need to look at the production of the videotapes as a work of art.

A work of art, says Dewey, is what it does, not what it is (Fesmire, 2003, p. 109). An art product is potentially an art work. It becomes a work when it is an active component in the ongoing communal quest for meaning. Such vibrancy emerges within an interpretive community; a community engaged in a common effort to identify and secure what constitutes a good life.

The content of the videotapes is an art product; an artistic representation of the experience of becoming not Greek, or American, but what the seniors have defined as Greek-American. However, we must look at the impact of the stories on the group to find the art work. What responses were elicited from the speeches and ensuing conversations around the tables? What are the deliberations and what meanings are derived from them? It is the individual reflection and animated table discussions which follow the presentations that are the works of art.

Consider the seniors of St. Mary's. They gather every month; reminisce about their past; practice their religion, celebrate life's events using both Greek and American customs, and actively participate in the life story presentations. As individuals, they can be described by statements such as: Orthodox Christian; member of the seniors club; life story presenter (and table talk participant); Greek immigrant or child of Greek immigrant; product of a Greek home; "Good Greek boy or girl"; husband or wife to a Greek; parent who instilled Greek traditions in their children; non-Greek who became a member of the community through marriage, etc.

However, each of these descriptors only represents a piece of their identity. To get a clear and whole picture of who these people are, every experience and interaction within the community must be woven together like fibers in an ethnic tapestry. Dewey says, the "texture of the actual," (Fesmire, 2003, p. 68) is woven from many fibers which we imbue with various dyes. Imagination helps us identify new combinations of fibers so we can arrange and then dye them in novel ways. Thus, this tapestry which represents what it means to be Greek-American is continuously changing. It is a living work of art; each life story presentation adds to what the seniors' shared experiences mean.

We must go back and look at this dynamic tapestry again and again to understand who these seniors are: under different conditions; or from different angles- to see if new speakers, or experiences, like fibers have been added to the weave. In other words, the tapestry will always be a work of art in progress; it will never really be complete.

Previous analyses of the Greek-American experience, in conclusion, have not delved in depth on how these immigrant seniors developed a Greek-American identity. But by using Critical Pragmatism, I have shown how Greek habits manifested themselves; how American demands stressed those habits; and how a new and constantly changing identity emerges both for the Greek-American individual and the Greek American community as a whole.

Chapter Seven
Implications And Conclusions

This study was able to provide insight into many aspects of the assimilation of the Greek immigrant into American society. It captured the life's experiences of the immigrant, from childhood to the present, making it possible to identify critical transitions and adaptations from living a purely Greek lifestyle to one incorporating American elements; a hybrid Greek-American identity.

How might the findings from this study be used to understand how the immigrant experience of other groups affects their assimilation into American society? I propose that researchers and policy makers alike consider the following questions:

1. How might Dewey's theory inform our understanding of other first generation immigrants?

2. What opportunities for more effective cultural negotiation might be present in the application of Fesmire's concepts of empathetic projection and imagination?

3. What contingencies might new immigrant groups face as they negotiate their new hybrid identities?

4. How might the deliberate use of aesthetic representation work toward a more effective conservation and creation of reasonable cultural identity?

In the following section, I model how these four questions can be applied to two local immigrant populations: Somali and Hmong. I am not an expert in either ethnic community. My comments are only intended to highlight the need for studies of immigrant populations and encourage researchers knowledgeable in these communities to design studies around these questions; to ascertain how immigrants' experiences might affect how they see themselves, and track how the meaning derived from those experiences might evolve as additional experiences

are accumulated in order to understand what might promote (or hinder) the development of a positive ethnic-American identity and to recommend possible solutions to aid in their assimilation. Parallels are given with the Greek community for comparison purposes only.

Application Of The Analysis Questions To Two Local Immigrant Communities

1. How might Dewey's theory inform our understanding of immigrant communities?

Dewey's theory can be used to examine and understand the process whereby new experiences might alter the ethnic identity of the immigrant and influence the formation of a more ethnic-American identity. Immigrants often face unfamiliar situations involving language, dress, family dynamics, ethnic and religious customs, gender biases, etc., while adapting to life in America. Immigrants also discover that their past experiences do not prepare them for interaction within American society in areas such as education, healthcare, welfare, and public safety.

For example, immigrants often come from countries with more limited healthcare systems and often do not understand that preventive healthcare (e.g. vaccines, well-baby visits) is standard for children in America. Education and encouragement is often required to get immigrant parents to actively seek out these services for their children. Interacting with the American healthcare system results in a change in how they parent their children, and this change in habit enables a more hybrid ethnic-American identity to emerge.

Some general questions that researchers should ask when studying the development of an ethnic-American identity in immigrant populations are: What experiences do immigrants have when they leave the ethnic community? Is the ethnic community afraid of how American society might influence their members- especially the children, and how does the community react to that fear- particularly in the areas of education and healthcare? Do roles within the family

change? If so, what is the outcome? Does religion promote a blending of ethnic and American values?

We can even ask more specific questions on any one particular ethnic group. For example, what meaning do first-generation Somali immigrants derive when placed in the following scenarios?

1. For many Somali families, Friday is a Holy Day. Will parents send the children to public school (in session Mondays through Fridays) but keep them home on Fridays to worship? Will they instead send them to private school, use a tutoring service to make-up the missed work, etc.?
2. Islamic Law also makes it difficult for the Somali to participate in the American economy, because Muslims are prohibited from charging or paying interest in financial transactions. That is why many Somalis currently rent apartments or homes. What happens when Somali decide that they would rather own homes instead of renting? What if the children want to get a college education? How will they finance it?
3. Somali traditions and behaviors are tied to and defined by Islamic law- the basis of law in their homeland. Many Somali men in this community are taxi cab drivers. Conflict arises when they encounter passengers with service animals, as their religion forbids contact with unclean animals.

Will the Somalis choose to maintain rigid traditions and habits that isolate them from mainstream America, or will they adopt new habits that might lead to the development of a more positive hybrid ethnic-American identity? By understanding the types of experiences immigrants might have, we might then be better equipped to aid their assimilation to life in the U.S.

The Hmong community, unlike the Somali, has been established in this region for over 35 years; the Hmong community spans several generations that now include many U.S. born Hmong-Americans. The Hmong community, therefore, has already negotiated most of the issues that communities comprised almost entirely of first-generation immigrants (like the Somalis) must address. This Hmong community has, however, maintained a very specific first-generation habit; it uses a traditional clan structure where only male elders are selected for leadership positions.

The habit has been maintained out of respect for General Vang Pao. General Pao led the fight against the Communists during the Vietnam War. After Laos fell to the Communists in 1975, many Hmong (including General Pao) became refugees and ultimately settled in this region of the U.S., where he served as the central authority figure in this local Hmong community.

With General Pao's recent death, however, second- and third-generation Hmong no longer feel obligated to maintain the traditional clan power structure. As a consequence, the habit of choosing only male elders for leadership positions is being challenged. What did the General's presence mean for the Hmong community when he was alive? Will the Hmong community maintain or change how it elects leaders after the General's death? Several Hmong-American women have been elected to public office in positions such as local school board member, state senator, and Foundation President. Will these women now be asked to provide leadership within the Hmong community?

Dewey's theories can help us understand how an individual's experiences change his identity and how his experiences and the change to his behavior impact the people with whom he

interacts. These theories can then be used to examine the types of individual experiences that ultimately elicit modification of certain customs and traditions for ethnic communities.

Policy-makers can use Dewey's theories to anticipate what obstacles- language, religion, etc., exist within specific ethnic populations that prevent immigrants from taking advantage of various opportunities that might aid their assimilation into American society. Organizations whose mission is to assist immigrant populations, for example, can create and disseminate multi-language brochures that list what types of services are available along with contact information for further assistance; and they can hold monthly informational meetings at community centers where parents can be encouraged to seek social services, not only for themselves, but also for their children. Leaders of financial institutions should be encouraged to meet with members of the Somali community in order to investigate alternative options to purchase homes in a way that does not interfere with their Islamic beliefs.

2. What opportunities for more effective cultural negotiation might be present in the application of Fesmire's concepts of empathetic projection and imagination?

In this study, the seniors' process of re-examining the meaning of life's experiences could be best understood by applying Fesmire's work on Moral Imagination, which uses empathetic projection to reflect on and allow others' experiences to have an impact on our own opinions and beliefs, and imagination to creatively tap a situation's possibilities.

The seniors of St. Mary's were able to use empathetic projection to place themselves in each other's shoes, and then imagine what life would be like without the habitual behaviors that excluded inner-ethnic couples from belonging to the Greek community, or prohibited changes to the liturgy that would encourage individuals who do not speak Greek to join the church.

Moral Imagination can also be applied to other ethnic communities to understand how members might resolve conflict when traditions are challenged. Every ethnic community

experiences challenges to customs and traditions as members of the community assimilate into mainstream America. Researchers should ask: What experiences do immigrants have outside of their ethnic community that causes them to question the merits of maintaining certain ethnic habits? What happens when they share those concerns with others in their ethnic community? Are an individual's choice of habits to uphold or reject respected by the rest of the ethnic community? Do opportunities exist within the community to help facilitate understanding and acceptance of differing opinions? Moral imagination is found within the ethnic community's capacity to provide its members with opportunities to openly discuss differing viewpoints.

As more Hmong members, for example, disagree on whether or not to continue using the traditional practice of choosing only elder males as leaders, can they use empathetic projection to consider opposing viewpoints on whether or not to embrace a change in the leadership model. Can they imagine what a different model might look like and what might happen if it were employed?

Empathetic projection might lead later generation Hmong-Americans to ask: why do first-generation Hmong immigrants feel threatened and worry that Hmong customs and traditions will be lost if we choose women and young men to be leaders? Empathetic projection would also have first-generation Hmong ask: why are second- and third-generation Hmong-Americans so eager to move away from this tradition and advance reform? If they can truly understand each other's position, can imagination be used to create a new model that appeases members across all generations?

The Somali community is primarily first-generation and first-generation immigrant populations tend to cling to traditional modes of behavior. However, every immigrant community will experience challenges to traditional customs and beliefs. What event(s) will take

place within the family and/or the community to instigate change? Will moral imagination- the opportunity to openly discuss differing viewpoints and debate new possibilities be found within their community?

The ability to address critical issues such as: inter-ethnic marriage (Greek immigrant); community leadership (Hmong immigrant); or financial practices (Somali immigrant), depends on the willingness of a community's members to engage in open dialogue where differing viewpoints are considered. Do such discussions take place? Who participates? Evaluating the level of empathetic projection and imagination within a community can provide an understanding of why or why not the community retains a more traditional identity or progresses towards a more hybrid ethnic-American one.

In the current economy, hundreds of thousands of homes are sitting vacant as homeowners have defaulted on their mortgages creating a burden on many financial institutions. Policy-makers, for example, could establish special programs laden with incentives that might enable Somalis or other immigrant populations to not only acquire vacant properties, but to get involved in revitalizing deteriorated neighborhoods. Immigrants and the communities they move into would benefit from this partnership. And immigrants, as home owners, become stake holders in American society. Their involvement in community affairs will ultimately lead to successful assimilation as productive ethnic-Americans.

3. What does contingency theory say about how immigrant populations acquire hybrid identities?

Contingency theory states that the effectiveness of a decision depends upon: the importance of the decision quality and acceptance; the amount of relevant information possessed by everyone in the organization; the likelihood that everyone will cooperate in trying to make a good decision if allowed to participate; and the amount of disagreement within the organization with respect to their preferred alternatives.

When examined closely, a change in ethnic habits can always be traced back to one or two individuals who dare to question the status quo. These individuals continue to persuade others to their point of view until there is sufficient momentum within the community to initiate a lasting change. We can also predict that change in ethnic habits becomes easier in successive generations as later generations are further removed from the ethnic setting.

As we saw with first-generation Greek immigrants, contingency theory explained the Greek community's escalated response to inter-ethnic marriages: forbid before the fact; ostracize those who ignore the ban after the fact; and offer support only after tragedy struck.

Recall that Islamic Law makes it difficult for the Somali to participate in the American economy, because Muslims are prohibited from charging or paying interest in financial transactions. Under what conditions might this practice change? What might happen first? Will it be for home ownership, college education, or some other as yet undiscovered reason? Contingency theory says that if enough sentiment builds within the Somali community, then financial practices will be questioned and alternative responses may be investigated and implemented.

To this point, I have focused on how contingency theory can be used to examine changes in ethnic habits that lead to a new ethnic-American identity in immigrant populations. I will point

out, however, that contingency theory also applies in converse situations- that ethnic behavior can also be perpetuated into later generations if certain individuals are capable of persuading the community to maintain the status quo; not everyone participates in the decision making process, and alternatives are never considered.

In the case of the Hmong community, the traditional clan system and the habit of selecting only male elders for leadership positions has survived for over 35 years- well beyond the first generation! General Pao's presence (influence and authority) within the Hmong community allowed this habit to continue. No one from the Hmong community challenged General Pao on how leaders should be selected. But with the General's death, there has been a call for change from women and young men who wish to hold leadership positions within the community. The Hmong community therefore finds itself at an ethnic crossroads.

Will a strong leader emerge to replace General Pao and will he be able to convince members to maintain tradition? If a strong traditional leader does not emerge, what changes will take place in the community? If changes are considered, then what process will be used to elect leaders? Who will participate in the decision making process? Will everyone in the community follow whoever is selected for leadership? If women and young men are elected to leadership positions, in what direction will their leadership take the Hmong community?

Regardless of what issues are addressed within the Somali or Hmong communities, or any other immigrant group for that matter, it is paramount that a transparent process be employed to maintain a cohesive community. All members must be allowed, to not only voice their opinions, but also be involved in and buy into the outcome- even if the outcome ultimately steers the community away from tradition toward a more hybrid ethnic-American identity.

4. How might the deliberate use of aesthetic representation work toward a more effective conservation and creation of reasonable cultural identity?

Individuals in ethnic communities participate in many activities, whether secular or religious, that captures the essence of their ethnic communities. For example, the Greek community holds annual festivals at the church. Greek dancers come on stage dressed in traditional village costumes. They dance in circles, while holding hands, stomping feet, waving handkerchiefs, and yelling "Opa!" as Greek music plays in the background. The dancers are participating in an aesthetic representation of what it means to be Greek in this community. Greeks in the audience are also drawn into the performance as they recall what each dance means: courtship rituals, scenes of famous battles, etc. The performance becomes a unifying experience, for it not only conserves ethnic traditions, but it also creates opportunities for individuals to affirm their place within the community.

The seniors in this study went as a group to see the movie, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." While the movie showcased what it means to be Greek in a funny way, it did accurately portray some of the customs and traditions of the Greek community. The seniors commented on the movie for days, because they could relate to most of the idiosyncrasies portrayed by the actors. The movie is another aesthetic representation of what life is like for members in a typical Greek community.

The local Greek community has also used other forms of media to document their experiences as immigrants adapting to life in the U.S. A book was commissioned by the parish council of the Orthodox Church that chronicles the first 100 years of community life. It showcases the families/individuals responsible for the creation of the various social and religious organizations in the region and the impact these organizations had on the community.

For members of the Hmong-American community, aesthetic representation was present in the celebration of the life (and death) of General Pao. Tens of thousands of Hmong traveled to California to take part in a traditional Hmong ceremony to honor his passing. Observing Hmong traditional rites and recalling General Pao's efforts to lead the Hmong people and preserve their culture was to re-live the development of the Hmong-American community. The funeral proceedings were captured on video and posted on the internet, to document the proceedings for those not in attendance and for future generations. This event not only honored the life of General Pao, but also re-affirmed what it means to be a Hmong-American.

There is less known about the Somali community and their activities. What types of activities are occurring in the community that not only celebrate their customs and traditions, but also celebrate the fact that they are in America? What types of aesthetic representation will develop to conserve their cultural identity?

As you can see, aesthetic representation can take many forms; whether manifested in a dance, or written in a book, or viewed on the big screen. Regardless of the form it takes, the purpose of aesthetic representation is to capture the essence of a community. By participating in, or accessing these forms of aesthetic representation, members affirm their place (and identity) within the community, and have the opportunity to live out their culture either actively (e.g. through dance) or vicariously (e.g. watching a movie, reading a book). What form(s) of aesthetic representation are found in other ethnic communities that showcase their cultural heritage? And what type(s) of activities do their members participate in to affirm their place within the community?

A Call For Insiders

Who should conduct studies of this nature? In the process of conducting the study, I had to re-discover my own Greek-American identity in order to understand the data. An

understanding of the Greek language, Orthodox religion, Greek customs and traditions were all essential for interpreting the seniors' experiences in the proper context.

As a result of my experience, I believe qualitative studies on first-generation immigrant populations, due to their interactive nature, need to be done by insiders; individuals adequately equipped with knowledge of the language, customs, religion, etc., in order to gain acceptance of the study group and understand what is happening in the appropriate context.

Conclusions

Immigrants come to America looking for economic, social, or religious opportunities. They discover, however, that certain challenges must be overcome before they can adapt to life in America; ethnic habits are insufficient to negotiate unfamiliar situations that involve language, ethnic and religious customs, etc. Immigrants overcome these challenges by acquiring new American habits that supplant traditional ones, and in the process, acquire a more hybrid ethnic-American identity. Different immigrant groups may have different issues, but the process of acquiring new habits will be the same.

Studies are needed, therefore, to understand what experiences might promote (or hinder) the development of positive ethnic-American identities in immigrant populations. Theories like Dewey's Critical Pragmatism and Fesmire's work on Moral Imagination can provide a clearer understanding of the pertinent issues immigrant populations might face and may lead to possible solutions to address them.

This understanding can be beneficial in recommending policies to assist newly-arrived immigrants at state or national levels, and to aid organizations whose purpose is to help immigrants acclimate to life in America. In the end, American society benefits from helping immigrants develop a positive ethnic-American identity in order for them to become productive citizens and active participants in American society.

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Appendix A
Interview Questions

Can you tell me your name please?

What does that translate to?

Where were you born? Where were your parents born?

Why did you want to come to the United States?

What year was it when you came to the United States?

Did your whole family come to the United States?

When you came to the United States, could you or your parents speak English?

Please describe your first few years in America.

Where did you live?

When you think about growing up in Greece and then growing up in America when you came here, were things similar or different? Any memorable experiences that you had?

What about Greek customs?

Did you have relatives here in the United States when you first arrived?

You mentioned going to the Greek Church. Can you tell me more about what that was like?

How did you meet your wife/husband?

How old were you when you were married?

How did you end up here in Minnesota?

When you moved to Minnesota, did you start attending St. Mary's Church?

Did you meet other Greeks right away?

How many children do you have?

Let me ask you a question then, when you remember your childhood in Greece and you compare that to now and with you raising your family with your children – comparable experiences?

So you moved to Minnesota and you started to raise your family, you started to attend St. Mary's Church, and Eugenia told me that the kids speak Greek.
Did the children attend St. Mary's Greek school when they were growing up?

Were all the children baptized in the church?

Was it important to you that you lived or that you could go to St. Mary's church when you moved here?

What do you think it is about St. Mary's that attracts non-Greeks to become members?

Are your children married? Did they marry Greeks?

If not, how do you feel that they didn't marry a Greek?

Do you belong to any Greek organizations?

Did the children attend Greek School?

Do you belong to any American organizations?

Did your wife work outside of the home? How did you feel about that?

How would you describe yourself? Are you a Greek? Are you an American? How would you describe yourself?

How important was it to you to live in a community close to church?

One of the things that I had asked you earlier was – the differences or similarities between your family in Greece growing up, you as a child, and your family here, you as a parent. And you said they really weren't the same, but in terms of customs, in terms of experiences . ..

Your children, when they were raised. Did you uphold the same customs as when you were growing up?

Were there any customs in Greece that you experienced, that you said, "No, we're not going to do that here in the United States." Either because you as a child didn't like something and you said, "No, I'm not going to raise my children like that." Or was everything pretty much the same?

When it came to friends, were the children allowed to interact with non-Greeks?

Did you have any other Greek families at your home? Either friends or host parties?

Do you believe that the church is very important in your lives? In what way?

As far as you remember, was the Greek Church in Greece relatively the same as the church here?

How would you describe yourself? If you were to describe yourself, what words would you use to describe who you are?

Can you give me examples of American customs or traditions that you practice or have incorporated into your family?

How would you define "Greekness" – what qualities does the meaning of Greekness have?

Instead of describing yourselves, how do you think other people would describe you? People who are not Greek?

Can you think of any memorable experiences that you've had in the United States? Anything that comes to memory. It could be a great experience or it could be something that wasn't a good experience. Any experiences that you had that really just stick out in your mind.

What do you miss most about not being in Greece?

Did you ever consider going back to Greece?

Have any of your children expressed an interest to live in Greece?

How do you think people in Greece feel about you being in America? Relatives or non-relatives?

When you did start attending the senior monthly meetings?

Have you shared some of your experiences, like some of the other seniors?

If not, do you plan to give a life story speech?

When you hear seniors going up and sharing, what do you think of that?

When you hear people sharing how does that make you feel?

Have you heard any people sharing things that you've said, "Yeah, I experienced the same thing"? Do you ever make a connection with the people who speak? What was in common?

Is there anything else? I'm finished with the interview. Is there anything that you'd like to share with me that maybe we can talk about or maybe in talking something popped up that you want to share? Maybe there was something I didn't mention that you want to share with me?

Appendix B
CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

First-generation Greek immigrants in Minnesota

I am conducting a study about how personal experiences shape the identities of first generation Greek immigrants in Minnesota. I want to invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you contacted me after you had the opportunity to listen to me describe the nature of my research in the Terrace Room at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, where I was introduced to the Senior Citizen's Group by Helen Peters.

My name is Michael Varverakis and I will be conducting this study. I am a doctoral student in the Leadership, Policy, and Administration Department at the University of St. Thomas. My advisor there is Bruce Kramer.

Please take a moment now to read this consent form and then to ask me any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to talk with first generation Greek Immigrants and ask them about their personal experiences when they came to the United States.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to:

1. Talk with me for about 45 minutes to an hour. With your permission, I would like to audio tape our conversation.

2. In 2-3 weeks, schedule to meet with me again for about 30 minutes so that we can review the notes of our conversation for accuracy.

3. I will also view the center video tapes and attend monthly meetings.

Confidentiality:

The records of our conversations will be kept private. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. My research records will be kept in a locked drawer in my desk in my study at home; I am the only person who will have access to the records. I alone will have access to the data obtained from our conversations and they will only be used for educational purposes. I will destroy all records I have after 5 years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, any data collected about you will not be used.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Michael Varverakis. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 952-470-8083. You can also contact my advisor at St. Thomas University at 952-962-4894. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. Please initial here if you give me permission to audiotape the interview _____.

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Michael Varverakis **Date**